Islam

AN INTRODUCTION

Syed, Haider Ali Shamsi

ISLAM

an Introduction

BEGUM AISHA BAWANY WAKF
P. O. BOX 4178
KARACHI. (PAKISTAN)

And say, "MY LORD !
Have mercy on them (Parents)
both as they did care for me
when I was little."
al-Qur'an, xvii : 24)

Dedicated
to
our dear
MOTHER AND FATHER

September	1967-5000
July	1968-25000
July	1969-25000
April	1971-10000
November	1974-25000
July	1976-10000

Contents

INTRODUCTION

ISLAM has been a revolutionary force in human history. It has evolved the greatest civilisation of history—a civilisation which cast its glorious spell over more than half of the known world—and is even now, and will remain in the future, a force to be reckoned with. More than five hundred and fifty million people subscribe to this faith with forty member-countries of the United Nations having a majority of its followers. Naturally, the world is curious to know more and more about a religion that has been playing such an illustrious role in history. But the irony remains that the material on which the world is being fed is biased, distorted and even concocted, Islam and the Musalmans have been painted black and projected as bloodthirsty heathens who spread their religion at the point of the sword, trampling down all traditions of civilisation under their feet. Nothing can be farther from truth than this mud-slinging, which is the result of a historical conspiracy against Islam.

Islam, within no time, became a tremendous world-force. Some two hundred years back Islamic countries became the main target of expansionist European powers, their religion had to be denounced and mis-represented in every conceivable manner, so that the Muslim peoples could be subjugated and at the same time the possibility might be removed that their own people might embrace Islamic ideals and principles, as did Halaku Khan and his

people, who, after overrunning many Muslim countries, themselves became the torch-bearers of Islam and patterned their lives and set their governments on the Islamic principles.

The false picture and misconceptions which abound in respect of Islam will, it is hoped, be dispelled through this booklet. *Islam: An Introduction* attempts to present the true picture of Islam on the one hand, and the impressions of non-Muslims about Islam on the other. Some of the leading historians, philosophers and social thinkers of the non-Muslim world are quoted in this book. This, in a way, is the evidence of those who, though they do not subscribe to this faith, nevertheless dispel the illusions that have been woven and popularised by the vested interests opposed to the ideology of Islam.

Islam is a universal religion without distinction of race and colour and thus it belongs to the entire human race. It is a religion that can solve the problems of all ages and is equally suited to solve the problem of our "Space Age". Islam alone, of all religions, can guide civilisation which is on the brink of disaster. Western nations have to discover Islam if present civilisation is to be saved from its impending horrid doom. Realising this truth George Bernard Shaw, a leading social thinker and playwright, said: "EUROPE IN GENERAL AND ENGLAND IN PARTICULAR will in next half a century accept Islam or a religion similar to Islam." Thus it is imperative that every member of the threatened civilisation should understand the principles and preachings of Islam which not only lit the torch of knowledge in the dark ages, thus opening all the avenues that have led to our present technical and scientific achievements which can satisfy the quest of rational minds and thus guide them to their des-

tiny. This is what George Bernard Shaw meant when he said "Islam or a religion similar to Islam", as is evident from the life of many people who, when they learn about Islam, exclaim: "This is exactly what we have ourselves come to believe after many years of thinking and contemplation, having been disappointed and dis-owning the religion of our birth." Goethe, the famous German philosopher and poet when he learnt about Islam, pronounced: "WE RESIGN OURSELVES to God. If this be Islam, do we not all live in Islam?"

Similar reactions have often been expressed by many who have embraced Islam. Views of some of these converts have been collected in a separate booklet entitled "Islam Our Choice", also published by the Begum Aisha Bawany Wakf.

It is, therefore, evident that if Muslims do not come forward to enlighten the world with the real message of Islam, the only religion compatible with humn nature, the searching minds of the West will in their own individual efforts, given as they are to rational thinking, and having discarded their old unconvincing and illogical beliefs, are likely to be led to conclusions which may be similar to what Islam stands for and preaches. But it would not be the Islam as the Holy Qur'an defines it and wishes mankind to understand and follow, to achieve the object of his survival in the cosmic scheme of our mysterious universe, in which he has been gifted with powers to carve out his destiny for his eternal future, about which he is very sceptical and suspicious but can only be rationally satisfied by the Divine Message given in the Divine Book which is available to us in its pristine purity without the marks of time distorting it, as has been unfortunately the fate of other divine books namely the *Old* and *New*

Testaments.

Islam: An Introduction is being published on a large scale. The publication of this book and of our earlier brochures, *Islam Our Choice* and *Charm of Islam,* are the humble efforts of the Wakf. May God in His Mercy, accept our endeavours by breaking the walls of prejudice and revealing the Great Truth to all those human brethren in whose hands these booklets may fall and who are in search of the Real Truth.

I would like to conclude this introduction with the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"Let there be no compulsion
In religion: Truth stands out
Clear from Error: Whoever
Rejects Evil and believes
In God hath grasped
The Most trustworthy
Hand-hold, that never breaks.
And God Heareth
And knoweth all things."
(al-Qur'an, ii: 256)

EBRAHIM AHMED BAWANY,
Managing Trustee,
Begum Aisha Bawany Wakf.

CHAPTER—I

ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY and its CHARACTERISTICS

ISLAM is the religion for mankind and its message is universal and eternal.

Islam is not a religion only guaranteeing the betterment and uplift of an individual's private and personal life. Neither is it a religion consisting of some dogmas, rituals and customs. In fact, it is a complete way of life. It guides man according to the dictates of Allah Almighty received through His Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). It is an all-embracing system and code of life, that does not leave out any field of human existence to be ruled roughshod by Satanic forces. Islam stands for the establishment of the Law of Almighty on His universe. The following are some of the main characteristics of Islamic ideology.

(1) **A Complete Way of Life:**

A distinctive characteristic of Islam is that it is organised, disciplined and complete way of life. It does not confine its scope only to the private life of a man, it caters to all the fields of human existence.

Islam provides guidance in all walks of life—individual and social, material and moral, economic and

political, legal and cultural, national and international. The Qur'an enjoins man to enter the fold of Islam without any reservation and to follow God's guidance in all fields of life. Indeed it was an unfortunate day in the history of mankind when the scope of religion was confined to the precincts of man's private life alone and all his multifarious activities in all other fields were left to be guided by the whims and caprices of man himself. No other factor has, perhaps, been more important in causing the decline of religion and consequently human society in the modern age than its self-retreat into the realm of private life.

Islam, however, emphatically declares that its objectives are, on the one hand, purification of the soul and, on the other, the reformation and the reconstruction of society on the eternal and all-embracing principles set forth in the Qur'an and the life-example of the last Apostle of God.

(2) **Balance between Individualism and Collectivism:**

Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual personality of man and holds everyone personally responsible and accountable to God. It guarantees fundamental rights to the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. It makes proper development of the personality of a man as one of the prime objectives of its educational policy. It does not subscribe to the view that man must lose his individuality in the society or in the State. According to the Qur'an:

> "God does not change the condition of a people unless they first change that which is in their hearts." (*xiii:* 12)
>
> "Man shall have nothing but what he strives for." (*liii:* 40)

It also awakens a sense of social responsibility in man, organises human beings in a society and a state and enjoins the individual and the entire social organism to subscribe to the social good of all. In Islam, prayer is offered in congregation which inculcates social discipline among its followers. Everyone is enjoined to pay Zakat as laid down in the Qur'an: "In their wealth the beggar and the destitute have their due-right." (*li:* 19). The Holy Prophet said: "He is not a believer who takes his fill while his neighbour starves."

In short, Islam neglects neither the individual nor the society—it establishes harmony and balance between the two and assigns to each its proper role.

(3) **Unity of Matter and Spirit:**

A remarkable feature of Islam is that it does not divide life into water-tight compartments of matter and spirit. It regards life as a unity. It stands not for life-denial but for life-fulfilment. Islam does not believe in asceticism. It does not ask man to avoid or ignore things material. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life, and not by renouncing the world. The Qur'an advises us to pray as follows:

> "Our Lord! Give us the good in this world and the good in the hereafter." (*ii:* 201)

Allah strongly censures those who refuse to enjoy His blessings. The Qur'an says:

> "Say (to them): By whose order have you forbidden (unto yourself) those amenities which God has created for His bondmen and those good things to eat and use which He made for you) (*vii:* 32)

Islam's injunction is:

"Eat and drink*, but exceed not (the limits)." (*vii:* 31)

The Holy Prophet said:

"Keep fast and break it (at the proper time) and stand in prayer and devotion (in the night) and have sleep—for your body has a right over you, and your eyes have a right over you, and your wife has a right over you, and the person who pays a visit to you has a right over you."

Thus Islam does not admit any separation between 'material' and 'moral', 'mundane' and 'spiritual' life. It enjoins man to devote all his energies to the reconstruction of life on healthy foundations. It teaches him that moral and material powers must be welded together and that spiritual salvation can be achieved by using the material resources for the good of man, and not by living a life of asceticism.

(4) **Universalism and Humanism:**

The message of Islam is for the entire human race. God, according to Islam, is the God of all the worlds (al-Qur'an, *i:* 1) and the Prophet is a Messenger for the whole of mankind. In the words of the Qur'an: "O people! I am the Messenger of God to you all" (*vii* 158). "A warner to all the nations," (*xxv:* 1) and "We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the nations."

(*xxi:* 102)

In Islam all men are equal, whatever be their colour, language, race or nationality. It addresses the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed, and do exist even today

---

The injunction relates to all those things the consumption of which is permitted in Islam.

in this so-called enlightened age. Islam removed all these impediments and gave the idea of the entire humanity being one family of God. The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) said:

"All creatures of God form the family of God, and he is the best loved of God who loveth best His creatures."

"O Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the universe! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another."

"Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God."

Islam is universal in its outlook and approach and does not admit barriers and distinctions which divide humanity into warring hordes. It wants to unite humanity under one banner; and to a world torn by national rivalries and feuds, as is our world today, it brings the message of life and hope and promise of a glorious future.

(5) **Permanence and Change:**

Mr. Justice Cardoza of the United States of America has emphatically declared, and rightly so, that "The greater need for our time is a philosophy that will mediate between conflicting claims of stability and progress and supply a principle of growth." Islam bestows upon mankind an ideology that satisfies the demands both of stability and change.

Deeper reflection reveals that life is neither rigid beyond change nor is it merely a change pure and simple. The basic problems of life remain the same in all ages and countries, but the ways and means of solving them and the techniques of their handling have undergone various changes with the passage of time. Islam provides for both.

The Qur'an and the Sunnah embody the eternal principles of guidance given by the Lord of the Universe. This guidance comes from God who is free from limitations of 'space' and 'time' and as such the principles of individual and social behaviour revealed by Him are eternal. But God has given us the general principles only and has endowed man with the freedom to apply them in every age in the way suited to the spirit and conditions of that age. It is through *Ijtihad** that the men of every age try to apply divine guidance to the problems of their time. Thus the basic guidance is eternal and permanent while there is a mechanism to apply it to the peculiar needs of every successive age. That is why Islam ever remains fresh and modern.

(6) **A Revealed Religion:**

The fundamental characteristic of Islamic ideology is that it is not a man-made system but the one revealed by the Creator Himself. That is why it is altogether different and dissimilar from other ideologies which are the result of human thinking and human efforts and hence full of weaknesses, loop-holes and imperfections. But since a man's limitations do not permit him to perceive fully about the present and beyond his immediate environment, all the systems devised by men are of very limited use and validity. They may be helpful in dealing with some timely affairs or temporary problems but cannot be of abiding value and what is more important, cannot solve man's problems in their entirety. In contrast to this, Islam is not a man-made religion. It has been revealed to mankind by Almighty Allah, the Creator, Nourisher and

---

Ijtihad: means the exercise of judgment in accordance with the spirit and the general scheme of the Shariah in respect of matters which have not been laid down specifically and expressly.

Sustainer of the universe.

This universe has not come into existence accidentally, merely by chance. It has a Creator. He has appointed man as His deputy on the earth. God has ordained for the fulfilment of material and physical needs of man as well as for his moral, spiritual and intellectual requirements. To meet these objectives God sent His Prophets to lead man to the right path.

The duty of a prophet includes the dissemination of the message of God to all the people and to implement the teachings in such a way that his life-example may guide his followers for all time to come. That is why the fundamental sources of Islamic ideology are two: the Qur'an, the Revealed Book of the Lord, and the Sunnah, the precept and the practice of the Prophet of Islam, his entire life-example, the record of which is known as *Hadith*.

Since Islam is based on revelation, all its fundamental principles are unchangeable and no human being—nay, not even the entire Muslim World—can bring about any change in these principles. Thus the contention that Islam is that which Muslims practise is incorrect and to this misconception can be traced many a confusion that abounds in the Western world, in respect of Islam.

Although every religion claims to be a revealed way of life yet, today, no religion save Islam has its teachings quite free of all encroachments and inroads of time and society, First, the other religions date back to an age when there was no system of recording the things in writing. Besides this the followers of these religions have made additions and alterations and amendments in their teachings so as to suit their own views and narrow interests. In fact the adherents of none of the existing religions claim that their original teachings are extant in full and that

they never underwent change after change in different periods of history. The Qur'an on the other hand, exists exactly as first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). It has not undergone any change whatsoever.

(7) SIMPLICITY, RATIONALISM & PRACTICALISM:

Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple, intelligible and appealing to human reason. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs and dogmas. Unity of God, Prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and the concept of life-after-death are the basic articles of its faith. They are based on reason and sound logic. All the teachings of Islam follow from these basic beliefs and are simple to comprehend and straightforward to follow. In Islam there is no hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody is supposed to approach the Book of God directly and live his life according to its directives.

Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason, inculcates the spirit of inquisitiveness and exhorts him to use his intellect. It enjoins him to see things in the light of reality. The Qur'an enjoins man to pray: "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge" (xx: 114). It asserts that those who have no knowledge are not equal to those who have it (xxxxix:9), that those who do not observe and understand are worse than cattle (*vii:* 179). that the meaning of revelation becomes manifest to those "who have knowledge" (*vi* 98) and "who have understanding" (*vi:* 99) that "whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good" (*ii:* 260), they deserve the right to govern who, among other assets, have physical strength coupled with knowledge (*ii:* 249) and that of all things it is knowledge by virtue of which man is superior to angels and has been

made the vicegerent to God on the earth (*ii:* 30). The Prophet of Islam said:

"To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, male and female."

Islam takes a man out of the world of superstition and darkness and initiates him to that of knowledge and light.

Islam is a practical religion and does not indulge in idle speculations and futile theorisations. It claims that faith is not a mere profession of beliefs, it is the very mainspring of life. Righteous conduct must flow from belief in Allah. Religion is something to be lived, and not an object of mere verbal eulogising and lip-service. The Qur'an says.

"Those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to." (*xiv:* 29).

And Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"God does not appreciate mere belief, if it is not manifested through deeds; and does not accept a deed, if it does not conform to belief."

Thus, Islam is a simple, rational and practical religion.

(8) **STATUS OF WOMAN:**

From the material as well as the spiritual point of view Islam recognises the position of woman to be the same as that of man. It claims that both come from the same essence, and, therefore, if woman could be regarded as wicked (as some of the cults and religions like to call her), man should also be regarded as such. Or, if man had a single spark of nobility in him, woman should also have it. "Women", declared the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), "are the twin-halves of men."

The position of the mother is very much exalted in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)

said: "Paradise lies underneath the feet of your mothers."

As regards the position of woman as a wife, the Holy Prophet said categorically "The best among you is the one who is best towards his family."

With regard to woman as a daughter, the Islamic attitude can be realised from the reproaches which the Qur'an makes against the pagan, pre-Islamic behaviour at the birth of daughters: And they assign unto God daughters—be He purified (from this)!—and unto themselves what they desire (i.e. sons); and when if one of them receiveth tidings of the birth of a female, his face remaineth darkened, and he is wrath inwardly. He hideth himself from the folk because of the evil of that whereof he hath tidings, (asking himself): shall he keep it in contempt, or bury it beneath the dust? Verily evil is their judgment." (al-Qur'an, *xvi:* 57-9). The Qur'an reminds us ceaselessly that God has created all things in pairs, and for procreation both the sexes are equally indispensable, each one having its particular function suited to its own peculiarities in physique and physiology. The Qur'an proclaims: "Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned". (*iv:* 32).

In the economic sphere, woman can earn money and possess property just as man can do. "Men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have a portion of what the parents and the near relatives leave." (al-Qur'an *iv:* 7).

The mutual relation of husband and wife is described in the Holy Qur'an as that of a single soul in two bodies. "He it is Who created you from a single being, and of the same did He make his mate, that he might find comfort in her." (*vii:* 189). The same idea is very beautifully des-

cribed in different words at another place: "They (your wives) are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them" (*ii:* 187). Islam describes the house as a unit in the greater organisation of a nation as a whole. It speaks of husband as being "an administrator and supervisor over the people of the house" and the wife is described as, "an administrator and supervisor over the house of her husband and his children." The home is thus described as a kingdom, where authority is exercised by both the husband and the wife. But unless one of them is made responsible for the entire household, peace, harmony and tranquillity are bound to be affected, resulting in chaos and confusion in the little kingdom that a house is in the eyes of Islam. And naturally this responsibility must fall on the shoulders of man as he, being sturdier of the two, can discharge the duties and obligations better than the other partner. So this is in fact a sort of functional distribution of responsibility, and if man is put incharge of the affairs it does not in any way mean that woman is downgraded and made inferior to man. After all somebody had to manage affairs of this basic unit of the society and hence Qur'an cleared the confusion thus:

"Men are the maintainers of women, because Allah has made some of them to excel others, and because they spend out of their property." (*iv:* 34).

The Holy Qur'an says that God has made man and woman from the best stock and each has to play its own distinctive role. In fact Islam envisages a natural division of work between man and woman. While man is suited to fight and make his way through the thick and thin of life on account of his stronger physique and other attributes, woman is entrusted with the onerous task of bringing up the younger generations because of the preponderance

of the quality of love and compassion in her. The duties of bringing up the children and looking after the home belong to the woman.

The functional division of work as stated above, does not mean that woman has entirely been excluded from other kinds of activity. The history of Islam is witness to it. The care of the children did not prevent women from helping soldiers in the field of battle to perform a large number of duties such as the carrying of provisions, (Bukhari* 56:66), taking care of the sick and wounded (Bu. 56:68), removing the wounded and the slain from the battlefield (Bu. 56:68), or taking part in actual fighting when occasion arose and the exigencies of time called for it. (Bu. 56 : 62 : 63, 65).

Polygamy is a subject on which the orientalists are never tired of speaking and they dwell on it in a manner which betrays prejudice and rancour against Islam and their deep-rooted hatred towards an otherwise most enlightened and benevolent institution with which Islam has blessed the human society. No apology is needed for upholding this most balanced approach to social relationship between men and women. Through this institution Divine Guidance has steered a middle course between the two extremes that were devoid of rationality, decency and justice. The one extreme manifested itself in life-long celibacy and asceticism and the complete denial of even the legitimate demands of the flesh. And the other extreme exhibited itself in unsatiable sexual hunger and lust, reducing man to the level of animals and so debasing his nature as to debar all considerations of right and wrong and resulting in unhampered sexual anarchy and complete perversion of thought and values.

Bukhari Sahih, referred to here as Bu.

Islam's approach in this respect is most balanced and rational, and is based on the moral, physiological and psychological demands of man and woman.

Firstly, it must be understood that taking more than one wife is only permissible and not ordained. And then this permission is for one who can do justice between his wives whose maximum number can be four.

The Qur'an says: "Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one." (*iv: 3*).

Let us now see how some of the Western Thinkers view this institution. "There is", says Dr. Mrs. Annie Besant, the renowned English leader of the Theosophical Movement, "pretended monogamy in the West, but there is really polygamy without responsibility; the 'mistress' is cast off when the man is weary of her, and sinks gradually to be the 'woman of the street' for the first lover has no responsibility for her future and she is a hundred times worse off than the sheltered wife and mother in the polygamous home. When we see thousands of miserable women who crowd the streets of western towns during the night, we must surely feel that it does not lie in the western mouth to reproach Islam for polygamy. It is better for woman, happier for woman, more respectable for woman, to live in polygamy, united to one man only, with the legitimate child in her arms and surrounded with respect, than to be seduced, cast out into the streets perhaps with an illegitimate child outside the pale of law—un-sheltered and uncared for to become the victim of any passer-by night after night, rendered incapable of motherhood, despised by all."*

Annie Besant, *The Life and Teachings of Muhammad.* Madras, June 1932, p. 3.

A MIRROR FOR THE WEST

"You can find others," says Annie Besant in *The Life and Teachings of Muhammad*,"stating that the religion (Islam) is evil because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule the criticism which I spoke out one day in a London hall where I knew that the audience was entirely uninstructed. I pointed out to them that monogamy with a blended mass of prostitution was a hypocrisy and more degrading than a limited polygamy. Naturally a statement like that gives offence, but it has to be made because it must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world. Dealing with property, dealing with rights of succession and so on, dealing with cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect which was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hyptonised by the words monogamy and polygamy and do not look at what lies behind it in the West—the frightful degradation of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance."**1**

Dr. Annie Besant further says, "I often think that woman is more free in Islam than in Christianity. Woman is more protected by Islam than by the faith which preaches monogamy. In al-Quran the law about women is more just and liberal. It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognised the right of woman to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all times....

---

1. Annie Besant, *The Life and Teachings of Muhammad*, Madras, June. 1923, pp. 25-26.

It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls."1

A Practical Remedy:

J. S. Clear McFarlane writes in *The case for Polygamy:* "Whether the question is considered socially, ethically or religiously, it can be demonstrated that polygamy is not contrary to the highest standards of civilisation. . . The suggestion offers a practical remedy for the problem of the destitute and unwanted female; the alternative is continual and increased prostitution, concubinage and distressing spinsterhood."2

The problem of divorce also was solved by Islam in the best manner. It is not necessary to elaborate upon it because to-day it has become a recognised necessity with every people. Marriage has been made a social contract by Islam, and it can be dissolved if it proves in any way injurious or incompatible to the wife or to the husband. And in fairness, the wife has been given as much right to obtain the divorce as the husband. But Islam does not recognise the Russian theory3 of divorce at will in the same way as Islam refuses to countenance the Church's point of view *vis-a-vis* divorce. In Islam divorce is possible but not easy, because the restrictions imposed and the conditions prescribed by Islam are of a serious nature. In fact, it is unfair to call the Islamic law of divorce as lax, for a Muslim has to remember the words of the Holy Prophet which are recorded in Abu Daud: "Of all the permissible things divorce is the most disliked by God."

1. Annie Besant, *The Life and Teachings of Muhammad,* Madras, June, 1932,, pp. 25-26.
2. J. E. Clear McFarlane, *The Case for Polygamy;* London, 1934, p 30.
3. In Russia divorce has been made so easy that marriage has lost all its sanctity. See : Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and Conscience of the West.*

On the evolution of the institution of divorce, M. Letourneau observes in his *Evolution of Marriage*.

"Out remarks on the subject of divorce have led us to nearly uniform conclusions. They all show us that, however, dissimilar may be the countries or the epochs, the union of man and woman begins with rare exceptions, by the complete slavery of the latter. Then as the ages move on their course we see societies which become by degrees civilised, and in proportion to this advance the condition of the woman improves. At first the man could kill her if she displeased him: then, the case of adultery apart, he contented himself with repudiating her, and some rights were even granted to the repudiated woman. At length her right to seek divorce was recognised."[1]

And this right of the wife to seek divorce was recognized for the first time in the history of mankind by Islam!

1. M. Letourneau *Evolution of Marriage*, p. 247

CHAPTER—II

ISLAM: FAITH & PRACTICE

EVERY religion of the world has been named either after the name of its founder or after the community and nation in which that religion took its birth. We find the examples of this in Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc. Contrary to this rule Islam enjoys the unique distinction of having no such association with any particular person or people. It is a universal religion and its objective is to create and cultivate in man the quality and attitude of 'Silm' i.e. submission to Divine Will.

"Islam", as a matter of fact is an attributive title. Whosoever possesses this attribute, may he belong to any race, community, country or clan, is a Muslim. Islam is an attitude of mind, a way of thinking and a mode of life.

Islam is an Arabic word and connotes *submission, surrender* and *obedience*. As a religion it stands for complete submission and *obedience* to Allah.

Sources of Islam:

The original source from which all principles and injunctions of Islam are drawn is the Holy Book called al-Qur'an. This book was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), piecemeal over a period of twenty three years of the Holy Prophet's life.

The *Sunnah* of the Prophet is the second source from which the teachings of Islam are drawn. *Sunnah*

literally means a way or rule or manner of acting, or mode of life, and *hadith* means any saying conveyed to man either through hearing or through revelation. In its original sense, therefore, *Sunnah* indicates the doings and *Hadith* the sayings of the Holy Prophet. In the terminology of Islamic law, however, *Sunnah* and *Hadith* are used interchangeably and purport to convey any saying of the Holy Prophet, or any action or practice of his or his silent approval of an action or practice of another person.

The third source from which the law of Islam is drawn. is *Ijtihad* or exercise of judgment in accordance with the spirit and the general scheme of the *Shari'ah* in respect of matters which have not been decided upon therein. The word itself is derived from the Arabic root *jahd* which means exerting oneself to the utmost or to the best of one's ability, and *Ijtihad,* which literally conveys the same significance, is technically applicable to a jurist's exerting the faculties of his mind to the utmost for the purpose of forming an opinion in the light of the Islamic principles in a case of law where the Shari'ah is silent.

The fourth source from which the law of Islam is drawn is IJMA (consensus of opinion of pious and the learned).

The Qur'an does recognise revelation as a source of knowledge which is higher than reason, but at the same time admits that the truth of the principles established by revelation is confirmed by reason. Hence it repeatedly appeals to reason and denounces those who do not use their reasoning faculty.

These are the four sources from which the principles of Islam are drawn.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FAITH:

Islam means obedience to God. And it is a matter

of common-sense that this obedience cannot ensue unless man knows all basic facts of life and reposes firm faith in them. Faith consists in knowledge and belief. The Arabic word Iman literally means "to know", "to believe" and "to be convinced beyond the least shadow of doubt." Faith, thus; is firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction. And the man who 'knows' and reposes unshakeable belief in the Unity of God, in His Attributes. in His laws and the Revealed Guidance and in the Divine code of reward and punishment is called *Mu'min* (faithful). This faith invariably leads man to a life of obedience and submission to the Will of God. And one who lives this life of submission is known as a *Muslim*.

No man can become a true Muslim without faith (*Iman*). It is the very starting point without which no beginning can be made. The relation of Islam to *Iman* is the same as of a tree to its seed. Without *Iman* there can be no Islam.

Since the only authentic and reliable source of knowing Him and His Will is the teachings of the true Prophet and submission and obedience to Allah can only be made through this process of acquiring knowledge, Islam may be defined as that religion which stands for complete faith in the teachings of the Prophet and obedience to the ways of life taught and practised by him.

Articles of Faith:

The most fundamental article of faith enjoined by God is the Unity of God. This is expressed in the primary *Kalima* of Islam as *La ilaha illallah,* "there is no deity but Allah". The expression of this belief differentiates a true Muslim from a Kafir (unbeliever). This is very important as it absolves the concept of *Tawhid* (Unity

of God) of all probable impurities and makes it pure, simple and free from the danger of every conceivable shadow of *shirk* (polytheism).

Faith in the existence of God's angels is the second article of faith enjoined by God.

The third article of faith is faith in the *Books of God*. Books which He has sent down to mankind through His Prophets from time to time. God had revealed His Books to his Prophets before Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and these Books were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'an to Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him), although the original teachings of all revealed Books excepting the Qur'an have been tampered with and the Word of God is no longer preserved in them in its original, unalloyed and unadulterated form.

Faith in all the *Prophets of God* and in the *finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad* (Peace be upon him) is the fourth basic requirement in Islam. God has raised His Messengers among every people and all of them brought essentially that very religion—Islam—which Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) propagated. One who denies any one of them, denies all and one who confirms and believes in one of them must and ought to confirm all, including the last Prophet. It is for this reason that faith in all the Prophets of God is essential in Islam.

The fifth article of Islamic faith is belief in *Life after Death*. Islam has enjoined its followers to believe in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgment. According to this belief the life of this world and of all that is in it, will come to an end on one appointed day when everything will be annihilated. That day is called *Qiyamah* i.e. the Day of Resurrection.

The above-mentioned five articles of faith make

up the bed-rock of Islam. One who believes in them enters the fold of Islam and becomes a member of the Muslim community.

LAWS & REGULATIONS OF ISLAM:

The fundamental religious duties recognised by Islam are five, viz *prayer, zakat* or poor-rate, *fasting, pilgrimage* and *jihad.* While Jihad is a national duty, the first four are,more or less, individual duties. Among these four, prayer occupies the most important position, and is given the greatest prominence in the Holy Qur'an; poor-rate coming next to it.

The importance of prayer may well be judged from the fact that it was the first duty enjoined on the Holy Prophet; and that though prayer and *zakat* are often mentioned together in the Holy Qur'an prayer always takes precedence, and keeping up of prayer is the most frequently repeated injunction of the Holy Qur'an.

Islam seeks to instil the conviction that God exists, and is the real living force in the Universe. A firm and throbbing faith in Allah and His Supremacy is the *sine qua non* of Islam, and prayer is the means by which it is sought to achieve this great end.

Also, prayer to God is the natural sequel of the acceptance, in theory, of the existence of God.

Again, the right development of human faculties depends upon the purification of man's inner self and the suppression of evil tendencies. Prayer is a means of purification for the heart.

In Islam a particular day is not set apart for worship, as in Judaism and Christianity. One day of prayer, with no business and six days of business with no prayer, is not the Muslim's rule of life. Prayer is made a part of the everyday life of man. There is a prayer in the morning be-

fore sunrise when a man rises from his hed (*fajr*); another just after mid-day (*zuhr*); a third in the afternoon (*Asr*); a fourth at sunset (*Maghrib*) and a fifth before going to bed (*Isha'*). Prayer is the first daily work of a Muslim and it is also his last work of the day, and between these two there are, as already stated, other prayers during the hours of business or recreation. Thus Islam requires that in all the varying conditions through which man has to pass, his spirit should be in touch with the Divine Spirit. Even when busiest, he should still be able to disengage himself from all wordly occupations for a short while and bow down to his Lord in the prayer. The object in view in this arrangement is clearly that man should feel the Divine Presence under all conditions, so that while he is doing his work God should still be nearest to his heart. As such prayer becomes the fountain-head of moral energy for man.

ZAKAT:

Zakat or compulsory charity in its widest sense, is laid down in the Holy Qur'an as the second great pillar on which the structure of Islam stands.

The most frequently recurring words for charity in the Holy Qur'an are *infaq* which means spending benevolently, *ihsan* which means the doing of good, *zakat* which means growth or purification and *sadaqah,* which means 'truth' and has come to signify a charitable deed.

Charity, in the sense of giving away one's wealth, is of two kinds, voluntary and obligatory, *Zakat* is described as the wealth which is taken from the rich and given to the poor. The giving away of wealth to the poorer members of the community, is a source of blessing to the individual who gives it and who receives it on the one hand and causes increase in the wealth of the com-

munity as a whole on the other. At the same time it purifies the giver's heart of the inordinate love of wealth which brings numerous sins in its train. The Holy Prophet himself has described *Zakat* as wealth "which is taken from the rich and returned to the poor" (Bu : 24 : 1)

FASTING:

Fasting is the third pillar of Islam. Fasting means abstaining from food and drink and legitimate sexual relationship from dawn till sunset.

Fasting, according to Islam, is primarily a spiritual discipline and as a consequence it inculcates moral discipline. It is the training ground where man is taught the greatest moral lesson of his life—the lesson that he should be prepared to suffer the greatest privation and undergo the hardest trials. Another aspect of the moral development of man by this means is that he is thus taught to conquer his physical desires.

From yet another point of view fasting has an immense impact on society, for all the Muslims, irrespective of their status, must observe fast during the same month. This brings to prominence the essential equality of all Muslims and this goes a long way towards creating in them sentiments of love and brotherhood. During *Ramadhan* evil conceals itself while good comes to the forefront and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity.

Muslims are required to fast for the whole month of *Ramadhan*. Fasting commences with the appearance of the *Ramadhan* moon and ends with the appearance of *Shawwal* moon.

HaJJ:

Hajj or the Pilgrimage to Makkah, is the fourth basic *'Ibadat'*. It is obligatory only on those who can

afford it and that too only once in lifetime. It means the repairing to Baitullah (the House of Allah) to observe the necessary devotions.

Indeed the pilgrimage is one of the most important *Ibadats*. For unless a man really loves God he would never undertake such a long journey leaving all his near and dear ones behind him and incur so much expenditure.

The pilgrimage unites the Muslims of the world into one international fraternity.

Jihad:

Jihad is the last of the basic *Ibadats* of Islam. *Jihad* means struggle to the utmost of one's capacity. One who exerts himself physically or mentally or spends his wealth *in the way of Allah* is indeed engaged in *Jihad*. In the language of *Shari'ah* this word is used particularly for War that is waged solely in the name of Allah in self-defence or against those who perpetuate oppression against the followers of Islam. This extreme sacrifice of life in the defence of the Faith devolves on all Muslims.

Islam: The Most Perfect Religion:

In addition to being the last religion of the world and an all-inclusive one, Islam is the most perfect expression of the Divine Will. Thus the Holy Qur'an says: "This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you, and chosen for you Islam as a religion." (v. 3). Like every other form of consciousness, the religious consciousness of man has also sought perfection in socio-cultural terms, and Islam, as revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), is the embodiment of that perfect revelation. The principles that were being revealed to man through the prophets were completed and the total view of reality was given through Muhammad (Peace be upon him). It was a completion of the mission of his

predecessors and the perfection of the Code of Guidance for the man of the future. It is to this great truth that the words of Jesus Christ allude: "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth," (Jn. 16: 12, 13). Thus it is the great mission of Islam to bring about peace in the world, to gather together all the religious truths contained in previous religions, to correct their errors and to sift the true from the false, to teach the eternal realities which had not been preached, and last of all to meet all the moral and spiritual requirements of an ever-advancing humanity.

The perfection of religion and the completion of the blessings of prophethood go hand in hand. Religion being made perfect, and prophethood being made perfect, there remains no need for another religion after Islam or for another prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Islam came like a flood of light—it illumined the entire environment. Its charm so captivated many that they moved into its fold—but those who, for a variety of reasons, did not enter its fold, were also spell-bound. They could not help admiring its beauty and splendour and grandeur. They confessed its greatness and paid tributes to it. Their evidence is important in one respect—it comes from those who are not within it, from many who have, on the whole, been rather antagonistic; but they too had to admit its unique features, its serenity that casts its spell on all and sundry. It is a selection of such evidence that we now present.

ISLAM—A Simple, Humanitarian and Attractive Religion.

"Islam had the power of peacefully conquering souls

by the simplicity of its theology, the clearness of its dogma and principles, and the definite number of the practices which it demands. In contrast to Christianity which has been undergoing continual transformation since its origin, Islam has remained identical with itself."

(Jean L'heureux, *Etude sur L'Islamisme* p. 35).

"Two features in the Creed of Islam have always specially attracted me. One is the God's conception, the other is its unquestionable sincerity—a tremendous asset in human affairs, the religious aspect of them especially. After all, sincerity is almost divine and like love covers a multitude of sins."

(Major Arthur Glyn Leonard, *Islam—Her Moral and Spiritual Value,* **London, 1927).**

"Sense of justice is one of the most wonderful ideals of Islam, because as I read in the Qur'an I find those dynamic principles of life, not mystic but practical ethics for the daily conduct of life suited to the whole world."

(Sirojini Naidu, Lecture on *"The Ideals of Islam* vide *Speeches and Writings of Sirojini Naidu,* Madras, 1918, p. 167).

"The rise of Islam is perhaps the most amazing event in human history. Springing from a land and a people alike previously negligible, Islam spread within a century over half the earth, shattering great empires, overthrowing long established religions, remoulding the souls of races, and building up a whole new world—the world of Islam."

"The closer we examine this development the more extraordinary does it appear. The other great religions won their way slowly, by painful struggle, and finally triumphed with the aid of powerful monarchs converted to the new faith. Christianity had its Constantine, Buddhism its Asoka, and Zoroastrianism its Cyrus, each lending

to his chosen cult the mighty force of secular authority. Not so Islam. Arising in a desert land sparsely inhabited by a nomad race previously undistinguished in human annals, Islam sallied forth on its great adventure with the slenderest human backing and against the heaviest material odds. Yet Islam triumphed with seemingly miraculous ease, and a couple of generations saw the Fiery Crescent borne victorious from the Pyrenees to the Himalayas and from the deserts of Central Asia to the deserts of Central Africa ....Mohammed, an Arab of the Arabs, was the very incarnation of the soul of his race. Preaching a simple, austere monotheism, free from priest-craft or elaborate doctrinal trappings, he tapped the well-springs of religious zeal always present in the Semitic heart. Forgetting the chronic rivalries and blood feuds which had consumed their energies in internecine strife, and welded into a glowing unity by the fire of their new-found faith, the Arabs poured forth from their deserts to conquer the earth for Allah, the one true God...."

"They (Arabs) were no bloodthirsty savages, bent solely on loot and destruction. On the contrary, they were an innately gifted race, eager to learn and appreciative of the cultural gifts which older civilisations had to bestow. Intermarrying freely and professing a common belief, conquerors and conquered rapidly fused, and from this fusion arose a new civilisation, the Saracenic civilisation, in which the ancient cultures of Greece, Rome and Persia were revitalised by the Arab genius and the Islamic spirit. For the first three centuries of its existence (circ. A.D. 650-1000) the realm of Islam was the most civilised and progressive portion of the world. Studded with splendid cities, gracious mosques, and quiet universities where the wisdom of the ancient world was preserved and appreciated, the

Moslem world offered a striking contrast to the Christian West, then sunk in the night of the Dark Ages."

A.M. Lothrop Stoddard, Ph. D., *The New World of Islam*, London 1932, pp 1-3).

"There can be no question but that, with its pure monotheism, and a code founded in the main on justice and humanity, Islam succeeds in raising to a higher level races sunk in idolatry and fetishism, like those of Central Africa, and that in some respects, notably in that of temperance, it materially improves the morality of such peoples."

(Sir William Muir, *Mohamet and Islam,* London, 1895, p. 246).

ISLAMIC BROTHERHOOD—ALL ARE EQUAL

"Take away that black man! I can have no discussion with him," exclaimed the Christian Archbishop Cyrus when the Arab conquerors had sent a deputation of their ablest men to discuss terms of surrender of the capital of Egypt, headed by Negro Ubadah as the ablest of them all.

"To the sacred archbishop's astonishment, he was told that this man was commissioned by General Amr; that the Moslems held Negroes and white men in equal respect—judging a man by his character and not by his colour."

"Well, if the Negro must lead, he must speak gently", ordered the prelate, "so as not to frighten his white auditors."

"There are a thousand blacks, as black as myself, amongst our companions. I and they would be ready to meet and fight a hundred enemies together. We live only to fight for God, and to follow His will. We care naught for wealth, so long as we have the wherewithal to stay our

hunger and to clothe our bodies. This world is naught for us, the next world is all."

"Such a spirit of class distinction is certainly the greatest hindrance to missionary work in the East, as every impartial observer has noted. How, for instance can any other appeal stand against that of the Moslem who, in approaching the pagan, says to him, however obscure or degraded he may be, 'Embrace the faith, and you are at once an equal and a brother.' Islam knows no 'colour line."

(S.S. Leeder, *Veiled Mysteries of Egypt,* London, 1912, pp. 332-335).

"The Islamic brotherhood which they proclaimed was a real thing, and a new thing among Eastern nations. It is doubtful whether Christian Syrians ever felt the same sense of brotherhood with Christian Persians as Muslim Syrians did with Muslim Persians."

(Lawrence E. Browne, *The Prospects of Islam,* London, 1944, p. 12).

"But Islam has yet a further service to render the cause of humanity....No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and of endeavour so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small Muslim community in Japan, show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition."

(H. A. R. Gibb. *Whither Islam,* London, 1932 p. 379).

"But above all—and herein is its supreme importance in the missionary history of Islam—it ordains a yearly gathering of believers, of all nations and languages,

brought together from all parts of the world, to pray in that sacred place towards which their faces are set in every hour of private worship in their distant homes. No stretch of religious genius could have conceived a better expedient for impressing on the minds of the faithful a sense of their common life and of brotherhood in the bonds of faith. Here, in a supreme act of common worship, the Negro of the West coast of Africa meets the Chinaman from the distant East; the courtly and polished Ottoman recognises his brother Muslim in the wild islander from the farthest end of the Malayan Sea. At the same time throughout the whole Muhammedan world the hearts of believers are lifted up in sympathy with their more fortunate brethren gathered together in the sacred city, as in their own homes they celebrate the festival of *'Id al-Adha'* or (as it is called in Turkey and Egypt) the feast of Bayram".

"Besides the institution of the pilgrimage, the payment of the legal alms is another duty that continually reminds the Muslim that 'the faithful are brothers' (*xlix*-10—)religious theory that is very strikingly realised in Muhammedan society and seldom fails to express itself in acts of kindness towards the new convert. Whatever be his race, colour or antecedents he is received into the brotherhood of believers and takes his place as an equal among equals."

(T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam,* Lahore, 1956, pp. 415-416).

"It was the first religion that preached and practised democracy; for, in the mosque when the call from the Minaret is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, "God alone is great". I have been struck over

and over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man distinctively a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian, an Indian and a Turk in London, what matters that Egypt was the Motherland of one and India the Motherland of another."

(Sirojini Naidu, Lecture on **"The Ideals of Islam"** vide *Speeches and Writings of Sirojini Naidu,* Madras, 1918 p. 169).

"The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue. . . ."

"Though in certain other respects the triumph of the English-speaking peoples may be judged in retrospect, to have been a blessing to mankind, in this perilous matter of race feeling it can hardly be denied that it has been a misfortune."

(A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial,* New York, 1948, p. 205).

ISLAMIC LAW—THE MOST ENLIGHTENED JURISPRUDENCE

"The Muhammadan Law which is binding on all from the crowned head to the meanest subject is a law interwoven with a system of the wisest, the most learned and the most enlightened jurisprudence that ever existed in the world."

(Edmund Burke, in his *"Impeachment of Warren Hastings"*).

ISLAM IMPARTS KNOWLEDGE & CREATES INTELLECT

"To seek knowledge is a duty of every Muslim man and woman. Seek knowledge even though it be in China. The savants are the heirs of the Prophets. These profound

words of the great reformer are an indisputable contradiction to those who seek and exert themselves in putting the responsibility of the intellectual degradation of Muslims upon the spirit of the Qur'an. Let them read and meditate upon this great Book and they will find in it, in every passage, a constant attack upon idolatry and materialism: they will read that the Prophet incessantly called the attention and the meditation of his people to the splendid marvels, to the mysterious phenomenon of creation. The incredulous, sceptical and unbelieving may convince themselves that the importance of this Book and its doctrine was not to throw back, eventually, the intellectual and moral faculties of a whole people. On the contrary, those who have followed its counsels have been, as we have described in the course of this study, the creators of a civilisation which is astounding unto this day".

(Dr. A. Bertherand, *Contribution des Arabes au Progress de Sciences Medicales,* Paris 1883, p. 6).

"It is to Mussulman science, to Mussulman art, and to Mussulman literature that Europe has been in a great measure indebted for its extrication from the darkness of the Middle Ages."

(Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, *Speeches Delivered in India,* London, 1890, p. 24).

"It may be boldly asserted that no people in the world give the impression of being so religious-minded as do Muslims. All of life is saturated with the consciousness of God."

(Charles R. Watson, *What is this Moslem World?* London, 1937, pp. 38-39).

JIHAD & MUSLIM CONQUESTS

"The Crusades, the Turkish wars, and the great expansion of Europe widened the gulf between Christi-

anity and Islam, while as the East was gradually brought under ecclesiastical influence the contrast grew deeper. The theory, however, that the Muhammadan conquerors and their successors were inspired by a fanatical hatred of Christianity is a fiction invented by Christians."

(C. H. Becker, *Christianity and Islam,* London, 1909 pp. 28-33).

"Incidentally these well-established facts dispose of the idea so widely fostered in Christian writings that the Muslims, wherever they went, forced people to accept Islam at the point of the sword."

(Lawrence W. Browne, *The Prospects of Islam,* London, 1944, p. 14).

"The Jihad was not really obligatory except against peoples who had no revealed religion or who menaced the existence of Islam....Jihad had to be waged to defend Islam against aggressions——Once the war was terminated the Muslims always displayed a great tolerance towards the conquered peoples leaving them their legislation and religious beliefs."

(O. Houdes, *La Grade Encyclopaedia,* 1894, Tome 20, p. 1006):

"No other religion in history spread so rapidly as Islam....The West has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts that idea, and the Koran is explicit in support of the freedom of conscience. The evidence is strong that Islam welcomed the peoples of many diverse religions, so long as they behaved themselves and paid extra taxes. Muhammad constantly taught that Muslims should co-operate with the 'people of the Book' (Jews and Christians).

"True, there were often wars between Muslims and

either Christians or Jews (sometimes because the older religions insisted on battle,) and the Qur'an contains passages of primitive violence relating to those wars. But testimony is overwhelming that "followers of the Book" were usually given decent treatment, sanctuary and freedom to worship as they wished.

"Many Westerners, accustomed by their history books to believe that Muslims were barbarous infidels, find it difficult to comprehend how profoundly our intellectual life has been influenced by Muslim scholars in the field of science, medicine, mathematics, geography and philosophy. Crusaders who invaded the Holy Land to fight Muslims returned to Europe with new ideas of love, poetry, chivalry, warfare and government. Our concept of what a university should be was deeply modified by Muslim scholars, who perfected the writing of history and who brought to Europe much Greek learning.

"Although Islam originated in Arabia, today only a small percentage (7 per cent) of the world's Muslims are Arabians, and less than a quarter (20 per cent) speak Arabic as their native language.

"More than most religions, Islam preaches the brotherhood of all races, colours and nations within its fold. Muhammad himself probably had exactly the same skin colouring as Jesus—a very sun-tanned white—but today his followers embrace all colours; black men from Africa, yellow men from China, brown men from Malaya, white men from Turkey.

"Islam permits no priesthood, and because Muhammad had to fight so bitterly against idols, his religion discourages portraiture. Mosques are decorated with geometrical patterns only.

(James A. Michener, "*Islam—The Misunderstood*

Religion". in the Reader's Digest (American Edition, for May, 1955).

"History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have over repeated."

(De Lacy O'Leary, *Islam at the Crossroads,* London, 1923, p. 8).

"In their wars of conquest, however, the Muslims exhibited a degree of toleration which puts many Christian nations to shame."

(E. Alexander Powell, *The Struggle for Power in Muslim Asia*. New York 1923, p. 48).

ISLAM—A PERFECT & UNIVERSAL RELIGION

"The nobility and broad tolerance of this creed, which accepts as God-inspired all the real religions of the world, will always be a glorious heritage for mankind. On it could indeed be built a perfect world religion."

(Duncan Greenlees, M. A. (Oxon), *The Gospel of Islam,* Adyar 1948, p. 27).

"As a religion the Mohamedan religion, it must be confessed, is more suited to Africa than is the Christian religion, indeed, I would even say that it is more suited to the world as a whole. . . .

"It is undeniable that polygamy, or to speak more accurately, the principle underlying it, is not confined to Moslem peoples. To put the matter plainly, who can honestly say that the sexual morality of the West is superior to that of the East? A fair comparison would, I believe, very much favour the latter. Then it is undeniable also that faith in the power of the sword is by no means restric-

ted to the Islamic world. Who can bear more telling witness to the truth of this assertion than Moslems themselves who have suffered greatly from the sharp sword of the Western nations? Putting aside these two points of resemblance, the achievement of the Moslem faith enjoys, I maintain, a definite superiority, in proof of which may be cited Moslem abstinence, sense of fraternity, condemnation of usury, and recognition of prophets other than its own. Its quality may be summed up by saying that it takes a man as he is, and while it does not pretend to make a good out of him, it seeks to regulate his conduct so that at least he shall become a good neighbour."

(Lancelot Lawton, *The Sphere*, London, for 12th May, 1928).

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to possess that assimilating capability to the changing phases of existence which can make itself appeal to every age....

I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today. The Mediaeval ecclesiastics, either through ignorance or bigotry, painted Muhammadanism in the darkest colours. They were, in fact, trained to hate both the man Muhammad and his religion. To them Muhammad was anti-Christ. I have studied him, the wonderful man, and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ he must be called the saviour of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness. Europe is beginning to be enamoured of the creed of Muhammad. In the next

century it may go still further in recognising the utility of that creed in solving its problems and it is in this sense that you must understand my prediction."

A collection of Writings of Some of the Eminent Scholars, published by the Working Muslim Mission, 1935, p. 77).

ISLAM CAN FILL THE SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL VACUUM CREATED BY THE WEST.

"While Christianity in recent years has moved towards a social gospel, Islam has been a social gospel from the start.

"A significant distinction between the two Religious is that in the New Testament is a revelation of God; in the Qur'an is a revelation from God ....Any religion that has lasted fourteen centuries must have some thing fundamentally significant and meaningful to say to every man—whether he is a millionaire or a pauper, a prince or a slave. And Islam undoubtedly does."

(Wilfred Cantwell Smith. *Islam in Modern History*, London, 1946, pp. 22-23).

"In these recently and rapidly opened up tropical territories, the Western civilisation has produced an economic and political plenum and, in the same breath, a social and spiritual void.

"If ever the 'natives' of these regions (Central Africa and Indonesia) succeed in recapturing a spiritual state in which they are able to call their souls their own, it may prove to have been the Islamic spirit that has given fresh form to the void. This spirit may be expected to manifest itself in many practical ways; and one of these manifestations might be a liberation from alcohol, which was inspired by religious conviction and which was therefore able to accomplish what could never be enforced by the

external sanction of an alien law.

"Here then in the foreground of the future, we can remark two valuable influences which Islam may exert upon the cosmopolitan proletariat of a Western society that has cast its net round the world and embraced the whole of mankind."

(A. J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, New York 1948, pp. 207-208.).

CHAPTER—III

AL-QUR'AN

ISLAM, as we have seen, is the religion of God. It contains the code of life which Allah, the Creator and the Lord of the Universe, has revealed for the guidance of mankind.

For a proper reconstruction of Life on this planet man needs two kinds of things, viz. (2) innumerable substances and resources to maintain life and fulfil the material needs of the individual and the society: and (2) knowledge of the principles of individual and social behaviour to maintain justice and tranquillity in society and culture. The Lord of the Universe has provided for both these needs in full measure. To cater to the material needs of man He has provided nature with all kinds of resources, which lie at the disposal of man, who can make use of them as he likes. To provide for his spiritual. social and cultural needs He raised His Prophets from among humankind and revealed to them the code of life which can guide man's steps to the Right Path. The Qur'an is the final Book of Divine Guidance, revealed by Allah through His Last Prophet, Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

Each and every word of this Book is from Allah, the Creator of the Universe.

BASIC FACTS:

Qur'an literally means reading or recitation. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) did not receive the

whole of it at one stretch. Revelations came to him in fragments from time to time, covering a period of 23 years. As soon as he received a revelation the Prophet used to communicate it to his companions and asked them not only to learn it by heart—in order to recite it during the prayers—but also to write it down.

Though the Holy Qur'an was revealed piecemeal, yet the entire revelation is one organic whole. It is the Word of God, revealed to the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (Peace be upon him), through the angel Gabriel.

Whenever there was a revelation, the Prophet got it inserted at its proper place in the text revealed so far. There is indeed perfect evidence, internal as well as external, that every single word or verse or part of a verse, and every chapter that was revealed, has been put at a particular place by the Prophet himself under Divine guidance. The arrangement of the Qur'an was thus a part of the Divine scheme. The Holy Qur'an itself says: "Surely on Us devolves the collecting of it and the reciting of it" (*lxxv:* 17). The Holy Qur'an thus existed in a complete and ordered form in the memories of numerous companions in the life-time of the Holy Prophet, and had also been reduced to writing on such materials as were available for writing purposes in those days.

The Holy Qur'an is divided into 114 chapters, each of which is called a *Surah* meaning literally "eminence" or "high degree". The chapters are of varying length, the longest comprising one twelfth of the entire Book. All the chapters, with the exception of the last thirtyfive, are divided into sections (ruku), each section dealing generally with one subject, and the different sections being inter-related to each other. Each section contains a number of verses. The total number of verses is 6,240.

Another important division of the Holy Qur'an relates to the Makki and Madani surahs. The Holy Prophet, after he was raised to the status of prophethood, lived at Mecca for thirteen years. Then he was forced to migrate to Madinah where he spent the last ten years of his life. Those *surahs* of the Holy Qur'an which were revealed before the Hijra are called Makki Surahs and they are ninetytwo in number, whereas those revealed after the Hijrat are called Madani Surahs and are twentytwo in number. Again there are certain Makki verses in Madani Surahs and *vice-versa.*

The Qur'an is addressed to the entire humanity, transcending all barriers and limitations of race, region or time. Further, it seeks to guide man in all walks of life, spiritual, temporal, individual and collective. It contains directions for the conduct of the head of state as well as a simple commoner, of the rich as well as the poor, for peace as well as for war, for spiritual wellbeing as for commercial and material prosperity.

The Qur'an seeks, primarily, to develop the personality of the individual and then shape them into an ideal society, for ushering in an era when goodness and virtue may flourish and evil and vice eliminated. It declares that every human being will be personally responsible to his Creator. The method of the Qur'an is that it not only gives commands, but also tries to educate the people and convince them about the validity and usefulness of its injunctions. That is why the *'illah'* (undeclining reason) of a command is often given. It appeals to the reason of man and invites him to exercise his own intellect in order to understand himself, his station and purpose in life, his conduct with his fellow-beings and, above all his relationship with his Sustainer.

The Qur'an adopts various ways and methods for enabling man to understand the truth. It relates stories and parables and invokes the testimony of history to show what the right course is, and what doomed the nations in the past: The Qur'an teaches man the Attributes of the Divine Being which are manifest from the 99 Names of the Almighty, such as, the One, the Creator, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, the Powerful, the Just, the Merciful, etc., etc., The Quran also points out what the duties of man are with regard to God, to his fellow-beings and to his own self. It lays stress on the fact that man has been created to fulfil the wishes of his Creator and lead his individual and collective life in accordance with the instructions contained in the Holy Book and as taught by the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him).

The Qur'an is a comprehensive code of life covering each and every aspect and phase of human life. This Book of God lays down the best of rules relating to social life, commerce and economics, marriage and inheritance, penal laws and international conduct.

The diction and style of the Qur'an are magnificent and appropriate to its Divine origin. Its recitation stirs the spirit and soars the imagination of even those who are not so well-versed in the niceties of the Arabic language. Above all, the Qur'an has by virtue of its claim of Divine origin, challenged man to produce, even unitedly, just a few lines comparable to those of the Qur'an. The challenge has remained unanswered to this day.

The words of the Qur'an are:

"And if Ye are in doubt concerning that which We have revealed unto Our bondman (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside Allah if ye are truthful" (*ii:23*).

What a challenge the like of which man has never seen and shall never see! For all those who deny the Qur'an to be the Word of God, this challenge shall, till eternity, remain as a perpetual source of humiliation and a proof of their ignorance, prejudice, incompetency and powerlessness.

THE PLACE OF QUR'AN IN WORLD LITERATURE:

The Holy Qur'an occupies a place of such eminence in Arabic literature as is not and cannot be enjoyed by any other piece of literature. The place so occupied by it has not been attained at any time by any other book anywhere. This Book has not only remained, admittedly the standard of the language in which it is revealed. but has also originated a world-wide literature. The Holy Qur'an transformed a dialect spoken in a very limited area of a forgotten corner of the world into a world-wide language which became the mother-tongue of vast countries and mighty domains. It produced a literature which is the basis of the culture of powerful nations from one end of the world to the other.[1]

---

1. This is certainly not an exaggerated claim. The culture producing ideas of the Qur'an have left such a profound influence on the thought-patterns, philosophies and conduct of human life that their effect can be seen by any unprojudiced person. If the Qur'an had not been revealed, humanity would have yet been groping in the never-ending Dark Ages. A detached view of history fully demonstrates that the intellectual "explosion" created by the Qur'an girdled the entire globe with its life-giving, dynamic, ever-fresh message, at a time when Englishmen knew not even how to clothe their bodies and make their abodes. and Europe knew not even rudiments of civilised behaviour such as washing and bathing, and when the highest pinnacle of "wisdom" was considered to be physically strong in order to plunder, rob and kill one's neighbours and the lust of young men knew no bounds.

This was exactly the period when the bearers of the message of the Qur'an were establishing libraries (with hundreds of thou-

(*Continued on page* 44)

There was no literature properly speaking, in Arabic, before the Holy Qur'an. The few pieces of poetry that did exist never soared beyond the praise of wine or woman, or horse and sword, and can hardly be called literature at all. It was with the Qur'an that Arabic literature originated, and through the Qur'an that Arabic became a powerful language spoken in many countries and casting its influence on the literary histories of many others. Without the Qur'an, the Arabic language would have been nowhere in the world.

There are other considerations too which entitle the Holy Qur'an to a place of eminence to which no other book can aspire. This book gives a masterly exposition of the fundamental truths of religion and a complete scheme of life, the existence and unity of God, the principles of reward and punishments for evils, the inevitabi.ity of life after death, the existence of heaven and hell, the truth and necessity of revelation, etc. etc.

It offers a solution of the most bewildering problems of man's life on this earth, such as; the distribution of wealth; the relationship between individual and society; the question of man's true status and station in life; the balanced relationship between man and woman; whether his freedom is unbridled or he is accountable and answerable for his deeds; and all such other questions on which depends in any degree the happiness and advancement of man, and

---

(*Continued from page 43*)

sands of books) and the universities, and such centres of learning in Spain and elsewhere as attracted men from Europe; and they, after first mastering Arabic, got introduced to Greek philosophers, whom Europe had nearly lost if the upholders of the Qur'anic wisdom had not taken upon themselves the onerous task of rendering Greek thought into Arabic. It is Qur'anic spirit of enquiry, freedom and learning that inspired the thinkers who made the Renaissance possible.

about which the human intellect cannot present a balanced and satisfactory solution, and which have been a major rather the only source of all human misery and suffering throughout the long history of mankind.

More wonderful still is the effect which the Holy Qur'an produced on the life of the Arab people. The transformation wrought by its influence is unparalleled in the history of mankind. The most revolutionary change was brought about in the lives of an entire people in an incredibly short span of time, that is, a period of not more than twenty three years. The Qur'an found the Arabs as worshippers of idols, of trees and of heaps of sand; yet in less than a quarter of a century the worship of One God became the creed of the whole land, and polytheism in all its conceivable aspects had been wiped out from one end of the country to the other.

It swept away all superstitions, and in their place, gave the most rational code of life the world was thirsty for. The Arabs who had stooped to take pride in ignorance were, as if by a magician's wand, transformed into lovers of knowledge, drinking deep at every fountain of learning. And this was directly the effect of the teachings of the Qur'an which not only appealed to reason, but also declared man's thirst for knowledge to be insatiable.

The Holy Qur'an did not accomplish the transformation of the individual alone. Equally, it brought about a transformation of the family, of the society, nay of the entire peoples. Out of the warring elements of the Arab race, the Holy Qur'an welded a nation, united and full of life and vigour, before whose onward march the greatest kingdoms of the world crumbled.

In this way the Holy Qur'an effected a transformation of humanity itself, a transformation material as well as

moral, an awakening intellectual as well as spiritual. There is no other book which has brought about a change so deep and everlasting in the lives of men.

STATEMENTS OF NON-MUSLIMS ABOUT THE HOLY QUR'AN

QUR'AN—THE DIVINE BOOK

"On the whole we find in it a collection of wisdom which can be adopted by the most intelligent of men, the greatest of philosophers and the most skilful of politicians. . . . But there is another proof of the Divinity of the Qur'an; it is the fact that it has been preserved intact through the ages since the time of its Revelation till the present day. . . . Read and reread by the Muslim world, this book does not rouse in the faithful any weariness; it rather, through repetition, is more loved every day. It gives rise to a profound feeling of awe and respect in the one who reads it or listens to it. . . . It was, therefore, neither by means of violence of arms, nor through the pressure of obtrusive missionaries, that caused the great and rapid diffusion of Islam, but, above all, through the fact that this Book, presented by the Muslims to the vanquished with the liberty to accept it or reject it, was the Book of God."

(Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Apologie de I' Islamisme*, pp. 57-59)

******

ORIGINAL TEXT PRESERVED

"It will thus be seen, from the above, that a final and complete text of the Kor'an was prepared within twenty years after the death (A.D. 632) of Muhammad, and that this has remained the same, without any change, or alteration by enthusiasts, translators, or interpolators, up to the present time. It is to be regretted that the same

cannot be said of all the books of the Old and New Testaments."

(F.F. Arbuthnot, *The Construction of the Bible and the Koran,* London 1885, p. 5).

******

"So there has been no opportunity for any forgery or pious fraud in the Koran, which distinguishes it from almost all other important religious works of ancient times....It is exceedingly strange that this illiterate person should have composed the best book in the language."

(Basanta Coomar Bose, *Mohammadanism,* Calcutta, 1931, p. 4).

******

QUR'AN—AN INCOMPARABLE, MIRACULOUS PIECE OF LITERARY WORK

"From the literary point of view, the Koran is regarded as a specimen of the purest Arabic, written in half poetry and half prose. It has been said that in some cases grammarians have adopted their rules to agree with certain phrases and expressions used in it, and that though several attempts have been made to produce a work equal to it as far as elegant writing is concerned, none has as yet succeeded."

(F.F. Arbuthnot, *The construction of the Bible and the Koran,* London, 1885, p. 5).

******

"Whenever Muhammad was asked a miracle, as a proof of the authenticity of his mission, he quoted the composition of the Qur'an and its incomparable excellence as proof of its divine origin. And, in fact, even for those who are non-Muslims nothing is more marvellous than its language which with such apprehensible plenitude and a grasping sonority with its simple audition ravished

with admiration those primitive peoples so fond of eloquence. The ampleness of its syllables with a grandiose cadence and with a remarkable rhythm have been of much moment in the conversion of the most hostile and the most sceptic."

(Paul Casanova, *"L'Enseignement de l' Arabe au College de France,* in *Lecon d' overture,* 26th April, 1009).

******

"It (Qur'an) is a literal revelation of God, dictated to Muhammad by Gabriel, perfect in every letter. It is an ever-present miracle witnessing to itself and to Muhammad, the Prophet of God. Its miraculous quality resides partly in its style, so perfect and lofty that neither men nor *Jinn* could produce a single chapter to compare with its briefest chapter, and partly in its content of teachings, prophecies about the future, and amazingly accurate information such as the illiterate Muhammad could never have gathered of his own accord."

(Harry Gaylord Dorman, *Towards Understanding Islam,* New York 1948, p. 3).

"Well, then, if the Koran were his own composition other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not), then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding exidetial miracle."

(H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammadanism,* London 1953, p 33).

****

"All those who are acquainted with the Qur'an in Arabic agree in praising the beauty of this religious book; its grandeur of form is so sublime that no translation into any European language can allow us to appreciate it."

(Edward *Montet, Traduction Francaise du Coran,* Paris 1929, Introduction, p. 53).

******

"The Qur'an in its original Arabic dress has a seductive beauty and charm of its own. Couched in concise and exalted style, its brief pregnant sentences, often rhymed, possess an expressive force and explosive energy which it is extremely difficult to convey by literal word for word translation."

((John Naish, M.A. (Oxon), D.D., *The Wisdom of the Qur'an*, Oxford 1937, preface p. viii).

******

'THE KORAN is universally allowed to be written with the utmost elegance and purity of language, in the dialect of Koreish, the most noble and polite of all Arabians, but with some mixture, though very rarely, of other dialects. It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue....The style of the Qur'an is generally beautiful and fluent,......and in many places, specially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent ....He succeeded so well, and so strangely captivated the minds of his audience, that several of his opponents thought it the effect of witchcraft and enchantment."

(George Sale *The Koran: The Preliminary Discourse,* London & New York, 1891, pp. 47-48).

******

THE QUR'AN—AN EXCELLENT MORAL CODE

"The Koran abounds in excellent moral suggestions and precepts; its composition is so fragmentary that we cannot turn to a single page without finding maxims of which all men must approve. This fragmentary cons-

truction yields texts, and mottoes, and rules complete in themselves, suitable for common men in any of the incidents of life."

(John William Draper, *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe,* Vol. I, London 1875, pp. 343-344).

QUR'AN—THE MOST INFLUENTIAL & THE MOST OFTEN READ BOOK

"It (Qur'an) is more read than any other took in the world. The Christian Bible may be a world best-seller, but nearly 250 million followers of the Prophet Muhammad read or recite long sections of Al-Qur'an *five times a day,* every day of their lives, from the time they can talk."

(Charles Francis Potter, *The Faiths Men Live By,* Kingswood, Surrey, 1955, p. 81).

"The Koran is probably the most often read book in the world, surely the most often memorised, and possibly the most influential in the daily life of the people who believe in it. Not quite so long as the New Testament, written in an exalted style, it is neither poetry nor ordinary prose, yet it possesses the ability to arouse its hearers to ecstasies of faith.

"The Koran was revealed to Muhammad between the years 610 and 632 in the cities of Mecca and Medina. Devoted scribes wrote it down on 'scraps of paper, bark and the white shoulder blades of animals.' The early revelations were dazzling assurances that there was only one God, Merciful and Compassionate: "He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

"It was this message that swept away idols, and

inspired men to revolutionse their lives and their nations. In later years, when Islam began to penetrate large areas of Arabia and had acquired much power, the revelation dealt with the organisation of society, its laws, procedures and problems."

"Many revered names from Christianity and Judaism appear in the Koran. For example, five important chapters are titled Noah, Jonah, Joseph, Abraham and Mary. Lacking specific chapters of their own, but playing quite important roles, are Jesus, Adam, David, Goliath, Job, Moses, Lot and Solomon."

"The Koran is remarkably down-to-earth in its discussion of the good life. In one memorable passage it directs: 'When ye deal with each other in transactions involving future obligations, reduce them to writing.... and get two witnesses .... This is juster in the sight of God, more suitable as evidence, and more convenient to prevent doubts among yourselves!"

"It is this combination of dedication to one God plus practical instruction, that makes the Koran unique. Each Islamic nation contains many citizens who are convinced that their land will be governed well only if its laws conform to the Koran."

(James A, Michener, **"Islam—the Misunderstood Religion".** In *The Reader's Digest,* American edition for May, 1955).

******

"It must, however, be borne in mind that the Koran plays a far greater role among the Muhammadans than does the Bible in Christianity in that it provides not only the canon of their faith, but also the text-book of their ritual and the principles of their Civil Law.

"It must not, however, be forgotten that the central

doctrine preached by Muhammad. . . .was the unity of God, and that the simplicity of his creed was probably a more potent factor in the spread of Islam than the sword of the Ghazis.

"Islam, although seriously affecting the Christian world, brought a spiritual religion to one half of Asia, and it is an amazing circumstance that the Turks, who on several occasions let loose their Central Asian hordes over India and the Middle East, though irresistible in the onslaught of their arms, were all conquered in their turn by the faith of Islam, and founded Muhammadan dynasties. . . .

"Thus through all the vicissitudes of thirteen hundred years the Koran has remained the sacred book of all the Turks and Persians and of nearly a quarter of the population of India. Surely such a book as this deserves to be widely read in the West, more especially in these days when space and time have been almost annihilated by modern inventions and when public interest embraces the whole world."

E. Eenison Ross, *Introduction to the Koran*, London, pp. v-viii).

******

AL-QUR'AN—THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF KNOWLEDGE

"We must not be surprised to find the Qur'an the fountain-head of the sciences. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the holy book. In this way the Qur'an was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science

in the Muslim world....This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious questions after Arab methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed.

"Spiritual activity once aroused within Islamic bounds was not confined to theological speculations alone. Acquaintance with the philosophical, mathematical, astronomical and medical writings of the Greeks led to the pursuance of these studies. In the descriptive revelations Muhammad repeatedly calls attention to the movement of the heavenly bodies, as parts of the miracles of Allah forced into the service of man and therefore not be worshipped: How successfully Moslem people of all races pursued the study of astronomy is shown by the fact that for centuries they were its principal supporter. Even now many Arabic names of stars and technical terms are in use. Medieval astronomers in Europe were pupils of the Arabs.

"In the same manner the Qur'an gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of Nature in general."

(Hartwig Hirschfeld, Ph.D., M.R.A.S., *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qur'an.* London, 1902, p. 9).

"The Koran admittedly occupies an important position among the great religious books of the world. Though the youngest of the epochmaking works belonging to this class of literature, it yields to hardly any in the wonderful effect which it has produced on large masses of men. It has created an all but new phase of human thought and a fresh type of character."

(Rev. G. Margoliouth, quoted in *Introduction to the Qur'an,* by Rev. J.M. Rodwell, London 1918).

******

"It must be acknowledged, too, that the Koran deserves the highest praise for its conceptions of the Divine nature in reference to the attributes of Power, knowledge and universal Providence and Unity—that its belief and trust in the one God of Heaven and Earth is deep and fervent—and that....it embodies much of a noble and deep moral earnestness, and sententious oracular wisdom, and has proved that there are elements in it on which mighty nations and conquering .... empires can be built up."

(Rev. J.M. Rodwell, M.A., *The Koran,* London, 1918, p. 15).

"The truth is, I do not find any understanding author who controverts the elegancy of the Al-Qur'an, it being generally esteemed as the standard of the Arabic Language and eloquence."

(Dr. Hency Stubbe, M.A., *Rise and Progress of Mohammadanism,* London 1911, p. 158).

******

"I am Allah the seeing.
(This is) a Book which we have
revealed to you that you may
bring forth men, by their Lord's
permission, from darkness into
light, to the way of the Mighty,
the Praised one."

(The Qur'an, 14:1)

CHAPTER IV

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him)

TO every people God sent His Messengers and Prophets. But their teachings were limited to particular nations and, in some cases, to one or a few generations only, or to some particular region or locality. All these prophets were, in a way, national prophets, and their mission was limited to the moral uplift and spiritual regeneration of a particular nation or clan only. Since each nation in those days lived almost an exclusive life, and the means of communication between different races and regions were wanting, the responsibility of the MESSENGERS of God was, naturally, limited to the reformation of a particular people only. But the ultimate grand aim, which the Divine scheme had in view, was the uplift and unification of the entire human race. After all, humanity was not to remain for ever divided into small groups clans and watertight compartments of race or nationality, formed on the basis of considerations of blood or geography. In fact, such arbitrary divisions had, in course of time given birth to jealousy and mistrust, hatred and discord between one people and the other and many, in their selfconcept and arrogance styled themselves as the chosen people of God. Humanity was bitterly divided and every people had lost the message of God and obliterated through neglect, fraud or cunningness the Divine Message which God had sent through His Apostles. The time had come to bless the whole of mankind irrespective of their race,

clan, and region with a Universal Message in its final and completest form to serve as a guide and a comprehensive code of life for all human beings for all times to come. The days of national prophet, were over. Now the era of the World-Prophet had dawned, and humanity was honoured by having the Holy Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him), to lead it to the highest pinnacles of glory and excellence, of material advancement, moral development, social uplift, and spiritual bliss.

ARABIA: the Seat of the World Prophet

No other country could have been more suitable for the much needed world religion than Arabia. It is situated right in the middle of Asia and Africa, and Europe is not far away from it. At the time of Prophet Muhammad's appearance, the nations of Europe were inhabited in the Southern part of that continent, and thus these people were more or less at about the same distance from Arabia as were the people of India, This fact gave Arabia a central position in the then known world. It was, therefore, the manifestation of God's great Wisdom that He chose the land of Arabia for the birthplace of the World-Prophet.

The Arabs were idolators. They did not believe in the Resurrection and the life after death. They had preserved the rite of the pilgrimage to the House of Allah, the Ka'bah, an institution set up under Divine inspiration by their ancestor Prophet Ibrahim (Peace be upon him). But during the two thousand years that separated them from Prophet Ibrahim pilgrimage degenerated into nothing more than a commercial fair and an occasion for senseless rituals of idolatry. And this, instead of producing any good, only served to further degenerate them both socially and spiritually.

It was in the midst of such conditions and environment that Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was born in the year 570 after Christ. His father, Abdullah, had died some weeks earlier, and it was his grandfather who took him in his charge. According to the prevailing customs, the child was entrusted to a Bedouin foster-mother, with whom he passed several years in the desert. When the child was brought back home, his mother, Aminah, took him to his maternal uncles at Madinah. During the return journey, the mother died a sudden death. At Mecca, he lost his affectionate grandfather too. Then, at the age of eight, he was at last taken to the care of his uncle, Abu Talib.

By the time he was twenty-five, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had become well known in the city for the integrity of his character and honesty in his dealings. A rich widow, Khadijah, entrusted to his care the management of her commercial affairs, and he took her goods to Syria for sale. Muhammad (Peace be upon him) performed his duty with diligence and honesty and returned with huge profits which were unprecedented. She was greatly affected by Muhammad's honesty and nobility and at last she offered him her hand in marriage. At that time she was forty years of age and Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was only twenty five. The union proved to be most successful.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was totally different from the people among whom he was born and with whom he passed his youth and early manhood. He never told a lie and the entire nation was unanimous in testifying to his truthfulness. Even his worst enemies never accused him of telling a lie on any occasion during his entire life. He talked politely and never used obscene and abusive language. His bitterest critics among his contemporaries testify

to this fact. He had a charming personality and winsome manners with which he captivated the hearts of those who came in contact with him. In his dealings with the people he always followed the principles of justice and fairplay. He remained engaged in trade and commerce for years, but he never entered into any dishonest transaction. Those who dealt with him in business had the fullest confidence in his integrity. The entire nation called him *"Sadiq"* and *"Al Amin"* (The Truthful and the Trustworthy). Even his enemies deposited their costly belongings with him for safe custody and he scrupulously fulfilled their trust reposed in him. Even at the moment when his worst enemies joined hands and encircled his house in order to assassinate him, Muhammad (Peace be upon him), before leaving the premises and migrated to Madinah, gave all the valuables to Ali, his cousin, to be returned to their owners, many of whom were present at the moment outside the house to cut his throat. History fails to present an example of such integrity, honesty and sense of duty.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was the very embodiment of modesty in the midst of a society which was immodest to the core. Born and bred among a people who regarded drunkenness and gambling as virtues, he never touched alcohol and never indulged in gambling. His people were uncouth, uncultured and unclean, but he personified in himself the highest standard of culture and the most refined aesthetic outlook. Surrounded on all sides by heartless people, his own heart was ever overflowing with the milk of human kindness and compassion. He helped the orphans and the widows. He was hospitable to travellers. He caused harm to no one, rather, he went all out to suffer hardship for the sake of others. Living among those for whom war was bread and butter, he was

such a lover of peace that his heart melted for them when they took up arms and cut each other's throat. He kept aloof from the feuds of his tribe, and was foremost in bringing about reconciliation. Brought up in the midst of an idolatrous race, he was clearminded and possessed such a pure soul as he regarded nothing in the heavens and the earth worth worshipping except the One True God. He did not bow before any created thing and did not partake of the offerings made to idols, even in his childhood. Instinctively he had developed hate for the worship of all creatures and beings besides God. Thus the towering and radiant personality of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) might be likened to a beacon-light, in the midst of such a dark and dismal environment illuminating a pitch-dark night or to a diamond shining in a heap of dead stones.

Thence onwards Muhammad (Peace be upon him) became more and more absorbed in spiritual meditations. He used to retire during the whole month of Ramadhan to a cave, *'Ghar-i-Hira'* or "The cave of Hira," remembered as such, eversince. There he prayed, meditated, and shared his meagre provisions with the travellers who happened to pass by.

He was forty years old, and it was the fifth consecutive year since his annual retreats, when one night towards the end of the month of Ramadhan, an angel came to visit him, and announced that God had chosen him as His Messenger to all mankind. The angel taught him the mode of ablutions, the way of worshipping God and the conduct of prayer. He communicated to him the following Divine message:

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful the Most Beneficient,

Read: In the Name of thy Lord Who created, Created man from a clot.
Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who taught by the pen,
Taught man what he knew not.
(al-Qur'an, *xcvi*: 1-5).

Deeply affected, he returned home and related to his wife what had transpired. He was apprehensive and anxious. She consoled him, saying that he had always been a man of charity and generosity, helping the poor, the orphans, the widows and the needy, and assured him that God would protect him against all evil.

LIFE AND MISSION

After the first revelation the Prophet gave himself up more and more to prayers and to spiritual practices. The revelations were resumed after a pause and God told him that he had guided him to the right path, therefore he should take care of the orphans and the destitute and proclaim the bounty of God on him (al-Qur'an *xciii*: 3-11). This was in reality an order to preach. Another revelation directed him to warn people against evil practices, to exhort them to worship none but the One God, and to abandon everyting that would displease God (al-Qur'an, *lxxiv* 2-7). Yet another revelation commanded him to warn his own near rela

This continued all through his life since the Qur'an was not revealed all at once, but in fragments, as occasions arose.

The number of his adherents increased gradually. But with the denunciation of paganism, the opposition also grew intenser on the part of those who were firmly attached to their ancestral beliefs. This opposition degenerated in the course of time into physical torture of the Prophet and of those who had embraced his religion. They were thrown on heated sand and kept there for hours, cauterised with red hot iron and imprisoned with chains on their feet. Some of them died of the effects of torture, but none would renounce his religion. At last, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) advised his companions to quit their native town and take refuge abroad, in Abyssinia, "where governs a just ruler, in whose realm nobody is oppressed." Dozens of Muslims profited by this advice. These secret migrations led to further persecution of those who remained behind.

When a large number of the Meccan Muslims migrated to Abyssinia, the leaders of paganism sent an ultimatum to the tribe of the Prophet, demanding that he should be excommunicated and outlawed and delivered to the pagans for being put to death. Every member of the tribe, Muslim and non-Muslim, rejected the demand. Thereupon the city decided on a complete boycott of the tribe. Nobody was to talk to them or have commercial or matrimonial relations with them. The tribes inhabiting the suburbs, who were allies of the Meccans, also joined in the boycott. This resulted in stark misery among the innocent victims consisting of children, men and women, the old and the sick and the feeble. Some of them succumbed, yet nobody would hand over the Prophet to his

persecutors. This continued for full three years. Thereafter, four or five non-Muslims, more humane than the rest and belonging to different clans, proclaimed publicly their denunciation of the unjust and inhuman boycott. The proclamation which had been hung in the Ka'bah, was found, as Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had predicted, eaten by white ants, sparing nothing but the words "GOD" and "Muhammad".

The boycott was lifted, yet owing to the privations and hardships they had to bear, his wife Khadijah and his uncle Abu Talib died soon after.

It was at this time that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) experienced the Mi'raj (ascension). He had a vision of God and was witness to the marvels of the celestial regions.

The hostility of the pagans increased as the news of this celestial meeting was spread. The Prophet, therefore, was obliged to quit his native town in search of an abode elsewhere from where he could carry on his great mission.

He went to Ta'if, but returned immediately to Mecca, as the wicked people of that town chased the Prophet out of their city, pelting stones on him and wounding thim.

The annual pilgrimage of the Ka'bah brough to Mecca people from all parts of Arabia. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) tried to convey to them the message of God. There he met some inhabitants of Yathrib, who had some notion of prophets and Divine messages. So they decided not to lose time and forthwith embraced Islam.

THE HIJRAH

The following year a dozen new converts from Yathrib took the oath of allegiance to him and requested him to

provide them with a missionary teacher. The work of the missionary, Mus'ab, proved very successful and he led a contingent of seventy-three new converts to Mecca, at the time of the pilgrimage. They invited the Prophet and his Meccan companions to migrate to their town, and promised to shelter the Prophet and to treat him and his companions as their own kith and kin.

Secretly and in small groups, the greater part of the Muslims migrated to Yathrib. Upon this the pagans of Mecca not only confiscated the property of the evacuees, but devised a plot to assassinate the Prophet. It now became impossible for him to remain at home. It is noteworthy that in spite of their hostility to his mission, the pagans had unbounded confidence in his probity, so much so that many of them used to deposit their valuables with him. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) now entrusted all these deposits to his cousin, Ali, with instructions to return the same in due course to their rightful owners. He then left the town secretly. in the company of his faithful friend, Abu Bakr, After several adventures they succeeded in reaching Yathrib in safety. This happened in 622, whence starts the Hijrah calendar. After the Prophet's migration Yathrib began to be called *Madinatun Nabi* and later Madinah.

The Prophet created a brotherhood between the immigrants and an equal number of well-to-do Medinans. They worked together to earn their livelihood, and aided one another in the business of life. Thus the problem of rehabilitation of the displaced persons was solved satisfactorily.

THE FIRST ISLAMIC STATE

The Prophet then invited the representatives of the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims of Madinah and with

their assent, endowed the city with a written constitution. Therein he defined the duties and rights both of the citizens and the head of the state—the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), who was unanimously hailed as such. This document laid down principles of defence and foreign policy. It recognised that the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) would have the final word in all differences. It also recognised the liberty of religion for all.

Again the Meccans sent an ultimatum to the Medinans demanding the expulsion of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his companions. A few months later in the year 2 Hijra, they sent a powerful army against the Prophet, who opposed them at Badr, and the pagans thrice as numerous as the Muslims, were routed. After a year of preparations, the Meccans again invaded Madinah to avenge the defeat of Badr. They were now four times as numerous as the Muslims. After a bloody encounter at Uhud, the enemy retired, leaving the issue undecided.

After some time the Prophet tried once more to reconcile with the Meccans. The Prophet promised them transit facilities, extradition of their fugitives and the fulfilment of every condition they desired. The two contracting parties promised at Hudaibiyah not only the maintenance of peace, but the observance of neutrality in their conflict with third parties.

Utilising the opportunity given by peace, the Prophet launched an intensive programme for the propagation of Islam. He addressed missionary letters to foreign rulers.

VICTORY OVER MECCA

At this time the pagans of Mecca violated the terms of the treaty of Hudaibiya. Upon this, the Prophet himself led an army ten thousand strong, and surprised Mecca

by occupying it in a bloodless manner. As a benevolent conqueror, he caused the vanquished people to assemble, reminded them of their ill deeds, their religious persecutions, unjust confiscation of evacuee property, ceaseless invasions and senseless hostilities for twenty years. He asked them: "What do you expect of me?" When everybody lowered his head with shame, the Prophet proclaimed: "May God pardon you: go in peace; there shall be no responsibility on you today. You are free!" He even renounced the claim for the restoration of the Muslim property confiscated by the pagans. This produced a great psychological change of hearts. When a Mecca chief advanced with a fulsome heart towards the Prophet, after hearing this general amnesty, in order to declare his acceptance of Islam, the Prophet told him: "And in my turn, I appoint you the Governor of Mecca!" Without leaving a single soldier in the conquered city, the Prophet retired to Madinah. The Islamisation of Mecca, which was accomplished in a few hours, was complete.

In all the wars extending over a period of ten years, the non-Muslim loss on the battle-field was only about 250 persons killed and the Muslim losses were even less.

In the year 10 Hijra when the Prophet went o Mecca for Hajj, he met 140,000 Muslims there, who had come from different parts of Arabia to fulfil their religious obligation. He addressed to them this celebrated sermon in which he gave a summary of his teachings.

On his return to Madinah, he fell ill, and a few weeks later, when he breathed his last, he had the satisfaction that he had well accomplished the task which he had undertaken to preach to the world.

GREATNESS OF MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him).

In the cavalcade of world history the sublime figure of

this wonderful person towers so high above all the great men of all times who are famous as heroes of nations, that they appear to be dwarfs in comparison with him. None of them possessed a genius capable of making any deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life. Some are the exponents of theories and ideas but are deficient in practical action. Some others are men of action but suffer from paucity of knowledge. Some are renowned statesmen only, others are masters of strategy and manoeuvering. Whereas his is the only example in which all the excellences have been blended into one personality.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) made an indelible impression on the hearts of thousands of his disciples, by his forceful personality and moulded them according to his liking. By his iron-will he prepared the ground for revolution, moulded its shape and features, and directed the currents of events into a channel as he wished and desired. His was a personality par excellence.

SOME SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET

Knowledge:

"He dieth not who taketh to learning."

"To spend more time in learning is better than spending more time in praying; the support of religion is abstinence. It is better to teach one hour in the night than to pray the whole night."

"One learned man is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers."

"The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent on every Muslim male and female."

"He who leaveth home in search of knowledge walketh in the path of Allah."

Ink of the Scholar:

"The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr."

Conscience:

A man asked Muhammad (Peace be upon him) what the mark was whereby he might know the reality of his faith? Muhammad said, "If thou derivest pleasure from the good which thou hast performed and thou be grieved for the evil which thou hast committed thou art a true believer." The man said, "In what does a fault really consist?" Muhammad said, "When an action pricketh thy conscience, forsake it."

What is Best:

"It is better to sit alone than in company with the bad; and it is better to sit with the good than alone. And it is better to speak words to a seeker of knowledge than to remain silent: and silence is better than bad words.'

Manners and Courtesy:

"Verily, for a man to teach his child manners is better for him than to give away one bushel of grain in alms."

"No father giveth his child anything better than good manners."

"Respect people according to their status."

"Humility and courtesy are acts of piety"

Six Cardinal Principles:

"Guard yourself against six things, and I am your security for Paradise: When you speak, speak the truth; fulfil when you promise; discharge your trust; be chaste in thought and action; and withhold your hand from striking and from taking that which is unlawful and bad."

Morals:

"The most perfect of the believers in faith is the best of them in moral excellence."

Wish for Others:

"No man hath believed perfectly until he wisheth for his brother that which he wisheth for himself."

"None of you hath faith unless he loveth for his brother what he loveth for himself."

Kindness:

"All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most beloved of God who doeth good to God and His creatures."

Unity:

"All Muslims are as one body. If a man complaineth of pain in his head, his whole body complaineth, and if his eye complaineth, his whole body complaineth."

"Believers are in relation to one another as (parts of) a structure, one part of which strengthens the other."

Self Control:

"The most excellent *Jihad* (Holy War) is that for the conquest of the self."

"A man cannot be a Muslim till his heart and tongue are so."

Envy and Suspicion:

"Envy and suspicion disintegrate society. Suspicion is the blackest lie. Do not look for the fault of others."

Contentment:

"When thou shalt see one who hath been gifted with more than thyself in money and beauty, then look to those who have been given less thereof."

Alms-giving:

"The best of alms is that which the right hand giveth and the left hand knoweth not of."

Charity:

"Charity is a duty unto every Muslim. He who hath not the means thereto, let him do a good act or abstain from

an evil one. That is his charity."

"Every good act is charity."

"On every bone of the fingers charity is incumbent everyday. If one assists a man in riding his beast or in lifting his provisions, this is charity; and a good word is charity. Every step which one takes in walking over to (the mosque for) prayer is charity, and showing the way (to another) is charity."

"Removal from the path of that which is harmful is charity."

"Every good deed is charity, and it is good deed that thou meeteth thy brother with a cheerful countenance, and that thou poureth water from the bucket into the vessel of thy brother."

"To treat wife tenderly and put a morsel in her mouth is charity."

"To treat children affectionately and kiss them are charitable acts."

"To extend consideration towards neighbours and send them presents are charity acts."

Chastity:

"Modesty and chastity are parts of the Faith."

"I swear by God that there is nothing which God so condemns as his male and female servants committing adultery."

Peace-Making:

"Shall I not inform you of better act than fasting, alms and prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots."

Cleanliness:

"God is pure, and loveth purity and cleanliness."

Muslim's duties to Muslim:

"A Muslim owes to a Muslim six (duties) to be

bestowed liberally—he should offer him salutation when he meets him: and he should accept his invitation when he invites him; and he should pray for him when he sneezes, and he should visit him when he is sick; and he should follow his bier when he dies, and he should like for him what he likes for himself".

Duties of A Muslim:

"Feed the hungry and visit the sick and free a captive even if he be unjustly confined. Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or non-Muslim."

Every Child born a Muslim:

"Every child is born with a disposition towards the natural religion (Islam—submission to the Divine Will). It is the parents who make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian."

Prayer:

"The Lord doth not accept a prayer in which the heart doth not accompany the body."

"Say your prayers standing; but if you cannot sitting; and if unable to sit on your sides."

Each one a mirror unto his brother:

"Verily, each of you is a mirror to his brother; then if he seeth a vice in his brother he must tell him to get rid of it."

The Heart:

"Beware! Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body of man, which, when good, the whole body is good; and when bad, the whole body is bad, and that is the heart."

Aged Persons:

"Verily, to honour an old man is showing respect to God. To every young person who honoureth the old, on account of their age, God will appoint those who shall honour him in his (advanced) years."

Oppressed:

"Fear the prayer of the wronged one for verily there is no veil between him and God."

Every one is Ruler:

"Everyone of you is a ruler and everyone of you shall be questioned about those under his rule; the Amir is a ruler and he shall be questioned about his subjects; and the man is a ruler in his family and he shall be questioned about those under his care: and a woman shall be questioned about those under her care; and a servant is a ruler insofar as the property of his master is concerned and he shall be questioned about that which is entrusted to him."

Parents:

"Paradise lies at the feet of thy mother."

"One who is young shall not attain paradise if he neglects his parents when they are old."

"Allah's pleasure is in father's pleasure, and Allah's displeasure is in father's displeasure."

Women:

Women are the twin halves of men."

"When a woman observeth the five times prayers, and fasteth during the month of Ramadhan, and is chaste, and is not disobedient to her husband, then tell her to enter Paradise by whichever door she pleaseth."

"And the best of you are those who are kindest to their families".

Marriage:

"The best marriage is that upon which the least trouble and expense is bestowed."

"The widow shall not be married until she is consulted and the virgin shall not be married until her consent is obtained."

Divorce:

"With Allah, the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce."

"Shall I not point out to you the best of virtues? It is to treat tenderly your daughter when she is returned to you having been divorced by her husband."

Widows:

"A giver of maintenance to widows and the poor is like a bestower in the way of God, an utterer of prayers all the night, and a keeper of continuous fast."

"One who manages the affairs of the widow and the poor is like a bestower in the way of God, an utterer of prayers all the night, and a keeper of continuous fast."

"One who manages the affairs of the widow and the poor man is like the one who exerts himself hard in the way of Allah, or the one who stands up for prayer in the night and fasts in the day."

STATEMENTS OF NON-MUSLIMS ABOUT THE HOLY PROPHET

Muhammad's Unique Position in History

"Muhammad's unique position in religious history is due to the fact that he inspired all he did without being a saint or an angel, without having any attributes which were not strictly human. Outside his tremendous personality' he had nothing in life to distinguish him from other Moslems.

(R. V. C. Bodley, *The Messenger,* London, 1946, P. 338).

"Muhammad established his religious system in a manner not only suitable to the sentiments of his compatriots, to their understanding and to the dominating customs of their country but beyond this, so proportioned

to the common ideas of mankind, that he converted more than one half of all human beings to his opinions and all this in less than forty years."

(Le Comte de Boulainvilliers, *La Vie de Mohammad*, Amsterdam, 1731, pp. 143-144).

"Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569. was born at Mecca, in Arabia, the man who of all men, has exercised the greatest influence upon the human race."

(John William Draper. M.D., Ll.D., *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, London, 1875, Vol. 1. pp. 329).

THE MESSAGE OF GOD

"Mohammad possessed that combination of qualities which more than once has decided the fate of empires ......Asserting that everlasting truth, he did not engage in vain metaphysics, but applied himself to improving the social condition of his people by regulations respecting personal cleanliness, sobriety, fasting and prayer. Above all other works, he esteemed alms-giving and charity. With a liberality to which the world had of late become a stranger he admitted the salvation of men of any form of faith provided they were virtuous. To the declaration that there is but one God, he added, "And Mohammad is His Prophet". Whoever desires to know whether the event of things answered to the boldness of such an announcement will do well to examine a map of the world in our own times. He will find the marks of something more than an imposter. To be the religious head of many empires, to guide the daily life of one third of the human race, may perhaps justify the title of Messenger of God."

(John William Draper, M.D. Ll.D., *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, Col. 1. London, 1875, pp. 329-330.)

"Muhammad was a prophet, not a theologian, a fact so evident that one is loathe to state it. The men who surrounded him and constituted the influential *elite* of the primitive Muslim Community, contended themselves with obeying the law that he had proclaimed in the name of Allah and with following his teaching and example. They had a simple, robust faith that aws satisfied with a small number of formulae and a few rites."

(Maurice Guadefroy-Demomyness, *Muslim Institutions,* London, 1950, p. 20).

'His readiness to undergo persecutions for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement—all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an imposter raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad......Thus, not merely must we credit Muhammad with essential honesty and integrity of purpose, if we are to understand him at all, if we are to correct the errors we have inherited from the past, we must in every particular case hold firmly to the belief in his sincerity until the opposite is conclusively proved; and we must not forget that conclusive proof is a much stricter requirement than a show of plausibility, and in a matter such as this only to be attained with difficulty."

(W. Montgomery Watt, *Mohammad at Mecca,* Oxford, 1953, p. 52).

MUHAMMAD—A SIMPLE, SINCERE AND HUMANE PERSON

"I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind......I became more than ever convinced that

it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.

When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's Biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life."

(M. K. Gandhi, *Young India,* quoted in *The Light,* Lahore, for 16th September 1924).

"It is greatly to his (Muhammad's) praise that on this occasion (conquest of Mecca), when his resentment for ill usage in the past might naturally have incited him to revenge, he restrained his army from all shedding of blood. and showed every sign of humility and thanksgiving to Allah for His goodness......Ten or twelve men who had on a former occasion shown a barbarous spirit were proscribed, and of them four were put to death, but this must be considered exceedingly humane, in comparison with the acts of other conquerors; in comparison, for example, with the cruelty of the Crusaders, who, in 1099, put seventy thousand Muslims, men, women and helpless children, to death when Jerusalem fell into their hands; or with that of the English army, also fighting under the Cross, which in the year of grace 1874 burned an African capital, in its war on the Gold Coast, Muhammad's victory was in very truth one of religion and not of politics, he rejected every token of personal homage, and declined all legal authority; and when the haugthy chiefs of the Koreishites appeared before him he asked:

'What can you expect at my hands?'
'Mercy, O generous brother''
'Be it so; you are free, he exclaimed.
(Arthur Gilman, *The Saracens,* London, 1887, pp. 184-185).

''Mohammad was of middle height, rather thin but broad of shoulder, wide of chest, strong of bone and muscle. His head was massive, strongly developed. Dark hair, slightly curled, flowed in a dense mass almost to his shoulders, even in advanced age it was sprinkled with only about twenty grey hairs, produced by the agonies of His 'Revelations'. His face was oval shaped, slightly tawny of colour. Fine long arched eye-brows were divided by a vein, which throbbed visibly in moments of passion. Great black restless eyes shone out from under long heavy eyelashes. His nose was large, slightly aquiline. His teeth, upon which he bestowed great care, were well set, dazzling white. A full beard framed his manly face. His skin was clear and soft, his complexion 'red and white'. His hands were as 'silk and satin'. even as those of a 'woman. His step was quick and elastic, yet firm as that of one who steps 'from a high to a low place'. In turning his face, he would also turn his whole body. His whole gait and presence was dignified and imposing. His countenance was mild and pensive. His laugh was rarely more than a smile.

'In his habits he was extremely simple, although he bestowed great care on his person.His eating and drinking, his dress and his furniture retained, even when he had reached the fullness of power, their almost primitive nature. The only luxuries he indulged in were arms. which he highly prized, and a pair of yellow boots, a present from the Negus of Abyssinia. Perfumes, however, he liked passionately, being most sensitive to smells, Strong

drink he abhorred.

"He was gifted with mighty powers of imagination, elevation of mind, delicacy and refinement of feeling. 'He was more modest than a virgin behind her curtain,' it was said of him. He was most indulgent to his inferiors, and would never allow his little page to be scolded whatever he did. 'Ten years', said Anas, his servant, 'I was with the Prophet, and he never said as much as Uff' to me'. He was very affectionate towards his family. One of his boys died on his breast in the smoky house of the nurse. a blacksmith's wife'. He was very fond of children; he would stop them in the streets and part their little heads. He never struck anyone in his life. The worst expression he ever made use of in conversation was, 'What has come to him?' 'May his forehead become darkened with mud!' When asked to curse someone he replied. 'I have not been sent to curse, but to be a mercy to mankind. 'He visited the sick, followed any bier he met, accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner, mended his own clothes, milked the goats, and waited upon himself,' relates summarily another tradition. He never first withdrew his hand out of another man's palm. and turned not before the other had turned.

"He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; those who came near him loved him; they who described him would say, "I have never seen his like either before or after.' He was of great taciturnity, but when he spoke it was with emphasis and deliberation, and no one could forget what he said."

(Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Muhammad,* London, 1882, Introduction, pp. 27-29).

"Muhammd himself did not make any claim to infallibility. On one occasion he had a revelation censuring himself severely for having turned away from a beggar in order to speak to an illustrious man of the commonwealth, and he published this revelation, the very last thing which he would have done had he been an imposter, as ignorant Christians call the great Arab."

(G. W. Leitner, LL.D., M.A., Ph. D., D.O.L. *Mohammadanism,* Lahore, 1893, p. 4).

"To thoroughly comprehend the spirit of Mohammad or the soul of Islam, the student himself....must at the outset recognise that Mohammad was no mere spiritual pedlar, no vulgar time-serving vagrant, but one of the most profoundly sincere and earnest spirits of any age or epoch. A man not only great, but one of the greatest (i.e. truest) men that humanity has ever produced. Great, not simply as well as a spiritual builder who constructed a great nation, a greater empire, and more even than all three, a still great Faith, true, moreover, because he was true to himself, his people, and above all to his God. Recognising this, he will thus acknowledge that Islam is a profound and true cult, which strives to uplift its votaries from the depths of human darkness upwards into the higher realm of Light and Truth."

(Major Arthus Glyn Leonard, *Islam—Her Moral and Spiritual Value,* London, 1927, pp. 20-21).

"On the whole the wonder to me is how much, but how little, under different circumstances, Muhammad differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitude of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Medina, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace a substantial unity.

I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them; the accidents are changed, the essence seems to me to be the same in all."

(R. Bosworth Smith, M.A., *Mohammad and Mohammadanism,* London, 1874, p. 93).

MUHAMMAD—THE GREATEST OF TRIUMPHANTS —AN INSPIRING PERSONALITY.

"The day of Mohammad's greatest triumph over his enemies was also the day of his grandest victory over himself. He freely forgave the Koraysh all the years of sorrow and cruel scorn in which they had afflicted him and gave an amnesty to the whole population of Mekka. Four criminals whom justice condemned made up Mohammad's proscription list when he entered as a conqueror the city of his bitterest enemies. The army followed his example, and entered quietly and peacefully; no house was robbed, no women insulted. One thing alone suffered destruction. Going to the Kaaba, Mohammad stood before each of the three hundred and sixty idols. and pointed to it with his staff, saying, "Tru this come and false-hood is fled away! and at these words his attendants hewed them down, and all the idols, and household gods of Mekka and round about were destroyed."

"It was thus Mohammad entered again his native city. Through all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one."

(Stanley Lane-Pool, *The Speeches and Table-Talk of the Prophet Mohammad* London, 1882 Introduction, pp. 46-47.

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires

and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

(Lamartine, *Histore de la Turquie*, Paris 1854, Vol. II, p. 277).

"The spectacular success of Muhammad in unifying the tribes of Arabia under the worship of the one God, Allah, and in perpetuating his own name as Allah's prophet, can hardly fail to excite both wonder and admiration. The dire poverty which he endured so courageously in Medina is well known. His dwelling was a hut with a minimum of furniture....This was a man who could inspire his followers with zeal, and love for himself. He was calm in danger, and in the cave of Thaur assured Abu Bakr that God was with them. He showed a Spartan endurance of utter poverty, which he shared with his converts in Medina. By abolishing alcohol and prostitution he made an undoubted reformation in the life of Arabia."

(Rev. R. MacGregor, *Yorkshire Post* 8th June, 1935).

CHAPTER—V

Objections and their refutation

In this section we propose to consider some of the more common objections and criticisms which the Western authors prefer on Islam. We shall confine our discussion to the problems of Jihad, slavery and poly gamy.

Unfortunately in this respect most of the Western critics have not remained objective as we would have liked them to be, and have, often, indulged in or fallen a prey to the pernicious propaganda which has been going on unabated ever since the Crusades. Some of their writings on Islam, the Qur'an, and the life and achievements of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) are not only ridiculous but full of blasphemy and slur. Facts have often been ignored and credence given to fiction and fantasy.

It is true that the West has contributed much towards inculcating the spirit of scientific inquiry, free discussion and critical study in many fields of human endeavour. But when they turn to study and examine Islamic teachings something curious happens to quite a number of them. The ideals of scientific approach, deep study, careful analysis, unbiased probe and careful weighing of facts, it seems, leave them all at once, and they embark upon the task with prejudiced minds, preconceived notions, fanatical disregard of facts and brutal distortion of truth; in short, positive hatred against Islam and the Islamic people. Further, there is a deliberate attempt on their part to misinform their own countrymen and the world at large about the true significance of the Islamic message. To give only one example; whenever they try to study

something in its historical perspective, the entire glorious period of the history of Islam is often conveniently ignored, scrupulously avoiding all mention of the great contribution which Islam made in the annals of civilised mankind. Since they find themselves unable to acknowledge the truth they skip over the entire period—a period which has been a boon to mankind, that paved the way for intellectual development, and liberty and freedom of the human spirit—a period that was 'dark' in Europe, but very bright in the Islamic East. It is in the best interests of scholarship and of developing amity between the peoples of the world that this shadow be removed and the truth be allowed to be presented before all in its real form. An attempt is made in the following pages to give an exposition of the real position of Islam *vis-a-vis* three of the important themes which are presented in the West, in season and out of season, in a highly distorted way.

I

WAR AND JIHAD

A very great misunderstanding prevails specially in the West with regard to the concept of *Jihad* in Islam, and it is that the *Jihad* is supposed to be synonymous with "War" undertaken for the spreading of Islam. It is really most shocking that even the so-called research scholars of Europe have not taken the trouble of consulting a dictionary of the Arabic language, or to refer to the Holy Qur'an, to find out the true meaning and significance of the word *Jihad*. So widespread is this misunderstanding that a scholar of the fame of A. J. Wensink when preparing his concordance of Hadith, *A Hand Book of Early Muham-*

madan Traditions, gives not a single reference under the word *Jihad,* mentioning only the word "war", as if the two were synonymous terms. Another writer of repute, Klein, in *The Religion of Islam,* makes a similar statement: "*Jihad*—the fighting against unbelievers with the object of either winning them over to Islam, or subduing and exterminating them in case they refuse to become Muslims, and thus causing Islam to spread and triumph over all religions is considered a sacred duty of the Muslim nation." This is how the facts are mis-stated and the door opened for all types of baseless objections and uncalled for criticism of the tenets, beliefs and values of Islam. The true meaning and purpose of *Jihad* is as under:

THE TRUE MEANING OF JIHAD:

The word *Jihad* is derived from *Jahd* or *Juhd,* meaning ability, exertion or power; and *Jihad* and *Mujahadah* mean the exerting of one's power—repelling the enemy.

The Qur'an and Hadith have repeatedly emphasised the need and importance of defence of Islam. *Jihad* is a part of this overall defence of Islam. *Jihad* means struggle to the utmost of one's capacity. One who exerts himself physically and mentally or spends his wealth *in the way of Allah* is indeed engaged in *Jihad.* But in the language of Shari'a this word is also used for the war that is waged solely in the name of Allah. according to the principles laid down for such war and with the object of bringing an end to oppression and aggression against Islam. Its object is not to "propagate Islam," but to remove those tyrannical forces which are inimical to Islam and are not prepared to give all a fair deal.

Jihad is, therefore, far from being synonymous with war, while the meaning of "war undertaken for the

propagation of Islam", which is supposed by European writers to be the significance of *Jihad,* is unknown to the Arabic language and the teachings of Holy Qur'an.

Equally or more important is the consideration of the sense in which the word is used in the Holy Qur'an. It is known to all and sundry that permission to fight was given to the Muslims when they had moved to Madinah, or, to be more precise, the first orders came when they were about to shift to Mecca. But the injunctions relating to Jihad are contained in the earlier as well as in the later Meccan revelations. Thus the *Surah "Ankabout"* was revealed in the fifth and sixth years of the call of the Prophet, yet the word *Jihad* is freely used in this surah in the sense of exerting one's power and ability, without implying any sense of war. In one place it is said: "And those who strive hard (*Jahadu*) for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways, and Allah is surely with the doers of Good." (*xxix:* 69). The *Jihad* in this case, is the spiritual striving to attain nearness to God and the result of this *jihad* is stated to be God's guiding those striving in His ways.

There is another very popular misunderstanding, namely, that at Mecca the Holy Qur'an enjoined patience (*Sabr*) and at Madinah it enjoined *Jihad* as if patience and *Jihad* were two contradictory things. The error of this viewpoint is manifest if we look into the *surah al-Nahl* which concludes with the words:

"Yet thy Lord, with respect to those who fly, after they are persecuted, then they strive hard (*Jahadu*) and are patient (*sabaru*), thy Lord after that is surely Forgiving, Merciful." (xvi: 110).

When they reached Madinah, Muslims were forced to struggle for their very survival against a series of armed

attacks by their enemies who mustered all their strength to wipe out the followers of the Prophet. The Muslims were obliged to take up arms in self-defence. This struggle too was of course called *Jihad*—the word being used in the wider sense of a struggle carried on by words or deeds. Consider the following verse now:

"O Prophet! Strive hard (*Jahidu*) against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and remain firm against them: and their abode is Hell; and evil is the destination." (*ix:* 73; *lxvi:* 9).

Here the Prophet is bidden to carry on a *Jihad* against both the unbelievers and the hypocrites. The hypocrites were those who were outwardly Muslims and lived among them and were treated like Muslims in all respects. They came to the mosque and prayed with the Muslims. They even paid the *Zakat*. According to certain scholars of Islam the injunction to carry on *Jihad* against the hypocrites could not mean the waging of war against them. Rather, it meant *jihad* in the same sense in which the word was used in the Meccan revelations, i.e., striving hard to purify them and win them over to Islam. In fact, there are other instances of the wider use of this word. It is a mistake to think that *Jihad* means only fighting, the word is almost always used in the general sense of sriving hard, including fighting where the context so requires. "Those who believe and those who migrate from their homes and strive hard in the way of Allah" (*ii:* 218; *vii:* 74), is a description which applies as much to the fighters as to those who carry on the struggle against unbelief and evil in other ways. And the *sabirin* (those who exhibit patience and perseverence), and the *mujahidin* (those who struggle hard), are again spoken of together in a Madani revelation as they are in a Meccan revelation:

"Do you think that you will enter the garden while Allah has not yet marked out those whc strive hard from amongst you and He has not marked out the patient?" (*iii* :141).

JIHAD: Many shades of meaning:

Even in *ahadith,* the word *jihad* is not used exclusively for fighting. For example, *Hajj* is called a *Jihad.* The Holy Prophet said, "The *Hajj* is the most excellent of all *jihad*" (Bukhari *xxv:* 4). Then Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) has also termed of a simple invitation to Islam, as *jihad:* "May the Muslim guide the followers of the Book to a right course, or may he teach them the Boom" (Bukhari *lvi*: 99). All these *ahadith* show that *Jihad* includes the service of Islam in any form—through the word of mouth or pen or the sword, if need be.

The propagation of Islam is no doubt a religious duty of every true Muslim, who must follow the example of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), but "the spread of Islam by force" is a thing not consonant with the theory and practice of Islam. The Holy Book, on the other hand says the reverse of it in the clearest of terms: "There is no compulsion in religion", the reason being: The right-way is clearly distinct from the wrong." (*ii:* 256). This verse was revealed after the permission for war had been given, and it is therefore certain that the permission to fight had no connection with the preaching of religion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRUTH

That Islam never gave such a doctrine as that of waging an all-out war for the spread of it, is a fact which is now being gradually acknowledged by the Western mind. After beginning his article on *Jihad* in the *Encyclopaedia of*

Islam with the statement that "the spread of Islam by arms is a religious duty upon Muslims in general", D.B. Macdonald, in a way questions the correctness of his own allegation by adding that there is nothing in the Holy Qur'an to corroborate it, and that the idea was not present, even to the mind of the Prophet; "In the Meccan Surahs of the Qur'an patience under attack is taught; no other attitude was possible. But at Madina, the right to repel attack appears, and gradually it became a prescribed duty to fight against and subdue the hostile Meccans....the Qur'anic passages speak always of the unbelievers who are to be subdued as dangerous or faithless."

The true position is that the Qur'an does not enjoin the waging of war against *all* unbelievers as such so as to subdue them to Islam, nor did the idea ever cross the mind of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him). But it would be a mis-statement of facts to say that patience under attack was taught at Mecca because there was no other alternative, and that the right to repel attack came at Madinah. The attitude was no doubt a changed one but that change was due to the change of circumstances. At Mecca there was individual persecution and patience was taught. The earliest permission to repel attack is conveyed in words which show that the enemy had already taken up the sword or decided to do so. "Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed and Allah is well able to assist them...." (*xxii:* 39). This permission was given to a people upon whom war was made by their enemies. It was not a permission to wage war against all non-Muslim people in general but only against the people who waged war against Muslims, or who resorted to persecution and aggression against the weaker people and established tyrannical regimes which

stifled their liberty. It uses force to repel evil and bring an end to the tyranny of the *Taghut* and never to seek conversion, which can be accomplished only through a willing submission to Islam.

The second verse giving to the Muslims permission to fight runs as follows:

"And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, and be not aggressive; surely Allah doe not love the aggressor." (*ii:* 190).

Here again the condition is plainly laid down that the Muslims shall not be the first to attack. Aggression was expressly prohibited. Fighting in one's defence is a noble and a just cause upheld by all and everywhere.

Thus it becomes clear that the Muslims were allowed to fight in self-defence, to preserve their existence, and to repel persecution and tyranny. Islam keeps peace so dear to its heart that the Muslims are taught to accept peace and armistice during the course of hostilities if the enemy so desires. "And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it and trust in Allah: He is the Hearing, the Knowing, And if they intend to deceive thee—surely Allah is sufficient for thee." (*viii:* 61, 62). Peace is recommended here even though the enemy's sincerity may be doubtful.

This is our position in respect of war We offer no apology for what Islam is—it is truth unadulterated. We only take exception to those who attribute falsely or mistakenly to Islam what it is not, Our position is precisely as follows.

THERE IS NO COMPULSION IN RELIGION

Islam is a missionary faith and Muslims are enjoined to preach their religion and establish the Word of God on His earth. There are two aspects of the problem. enjoining right and virtue and forbidding evil and oppression. The Islamic injunctions are that there should be no compulsion

in religion and people of other faiths must not be converted to Islam by force, But, force can—and should—be used for the banishment of hostility, aggression and transgression (*Taghut*) which are the mainstay of persecution, oppression and intolerance. Islam does not enjoin toleration of the intolerant and the oppressor. Abul A'la Maududi states this very clearly in his scholarly treatise, *Al-jihad fi al-Islam:*

"The sword of Islam is sharp for those who are aggressors and who want to crush Islam and the Muslims, or who create disruption in this world and resort to oppression and persecution—and none can deny the genuineness of this stand —but those who are not oppressors, or aggressors or persecutors, who are not out to eliminate Islam or put obstacles in the way of Allah and who do not destroy the peace and tranquillity of the human society; decidedly the sword of Islam has nothing to do with these people. They may belong to any faith, and entertain and cherish any belief, however wrong and un-Islamic that may be, Islam does not disturb them, their life and property are *haram* (forbidden) in its sight and the sword of Islam is impotent against them".

THE QUR'AN ON WAR & TOLERANCE

The viewpoint we have stated above is based on the following injunctions of the Holy Qur'an:

"Whoever killeth a human being—unless it be for murder or for spreading (*fitnah* (mischief, corruption and persecution) it shall be as if he had killed the entire mankind." (*v:* 32).

"And fight them until there is no tumult or oppression and persecution (and there prevails justice) and re-

1 Abul A'la Maududi, *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam,* Islamic Publications Ltd., Lahore, p. 122.

ligion is for Allah; but, if they cease, let there be no hostility except against those who practise oppression." (*ii:* 193).

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities (and do not transgress the limits prescribed by Allah) Surely Allah loveth not aggressors." (*ii* 190).

"And whose defendeth himself after he hath suffered wrong—for such, there is no way (of blame) against them. The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress mankind and wrongfully rebel in the earth. For such. there is a painful doom." (*xlii;* 41-42).

"God forbids you not with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith, nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For Allah loveth those who are just. God only forbids you with regard to those who fight you for (your) faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). And whoever befriends them, they are the people who are unjust." (*lx:* 8-9).

These injunctions are very explicit. But it has further been certified in the Book of Allah that the use of force and compulsion in the preaching of Islam is not permitted.

"Let there be no compulsion in religion. The Right Path has surely been made distinct from the wrong; then, whoever disbelieves in the transgressor (*Taghut*) and believes in God, he has, then, got hold of the firm handhold; which shall never break. And God is Hearing, Knowing" (*ii:* 256).

This verse was revealed in Madinah and the occasion on which it was revealed throws light on its meaning, In the fourth year of *Hijra* the Holy Prophet exiled the *Bani Nadhir* for their mischief-making The exiled included those

children of the *Ansar* who were Jews at that time. It was a practice with Madinites that if the children of any woman did not serve. she would take a vow to *convert* the child who survived into a Jew. It were these children who left Madinah with the *Bani Nadhir*. When Islam had fully consolidated, the Ansar admitted that they used to allow their children to be converted to Judaism when they had not come into the fold of Islam and thought that Judaism was superior to their faith. But after Islam they cherished no such illusion and had full faith in Islam. And they wanted to compel their children to embrace Islam and said that they were not prepared in any way to let them remain Jews. It was in this context that the verse was revealed and it said: "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (vide: **Abu Daud, Nasai, Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Hayyan.** For ready reference see Maududi, *Al Jihad fi al-Islam*, pp. 122-123).

MUSLIM JURISTS ON TOLERANCE.

The Muslim Jurists and authorities on *Shari'ah* have very clearly explained the meanings of this verse which enunciates a fundamental postulate of law. Ibn al-Kathir, the great scholar of Islam, writes in his monumental commentary on the Qur'an:

"Don't compel any one to embrace Islam, for this religion is so obvious and evident, its arguments are so clear and convincing, and its appeal is so manifest that it is not necessary to compel anybody to enter its fold. Whoever has been given guidance by Allah and whose heart is open to truth—will embrace it out of free will, and as those whose faculties have been sealed, there is no use in forcing them into the fold." (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Urdu translation), Karachi, Vol. III, p. 7).

The famous commentator of the Qur'an Zamakhshari,

while determining the meaning of this verse, writes:

"Allah has not permitted the use of force and compulsion in matters relating to *Iman* (belief) and has left it to the free discretion of the people. This verse is explained by another verse if the Holy Qur'an:

'If Allah had willed the entire humanity would have embraced Islam. O' Prophet! then would you force the people to become Muslims?'

This means that had Allah willed to make all people Muslims, He would have made them so. (But He did not adopt that course) and left the entire problem to the free will and discretion of the people."

(Zamakhshari, *Tafsir Kashshaf*, quoted by Maududi, op. cit. p. 124).

The illustrious Muslim philosopher Fakhruddin Razi writes in his *Tafsir:*

"This view (that there is no compulsion in religion) is further confirmed by the fact that immediately after this verse Allah says: 'The Right Path has surely been made distinct from the wrong.' Thus reasons have been explicitly stated, arguements have been made crystal-clear. The other method which is left is that of compulsion but it is inappropriate. and is not permitted, for it runs counter to the principles of human responsibility."

(Imam Razi, quoted by Maududi, *op. cit.* p. 125).

The above discussion very clearly shows the Islamic approach to tolerance. This view is stated in the Holy Qur'an and has been upheld in the same spirit by all the leading Muslim thinkers of every age. Is this intolerance? Is this fanaticism?—it remains for our critics to prove if there is any substance in their allegations!

SLAVERY

One of the hackneyed objections of the opponents of Islam is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) advocated and established the institution of slavery. Nothing more mischievous than this can be conceived. The institution had been existing since time immemorial, and none of the pre-Islamic religions ever tried to abolish it. Rather it was recognised by all.

Even Christianity, which claims to be the most liberal religion of the world, regenerated the institution of slavery when the Romans were going to abandon it. She used it for centuries in degenerating vast human populations of the world. The description of severities perpetrated by the Christians upon innocent men, women and children of Africa and other territories to obtain slaves for their colonies, is not a pleasant reading.

None can deny the fact that the great cities of Christendom continued to remain the popular slave-markets of the world from the days of Constantine upon 1850 A.C. and that the Christian priests were for centuries the most zealous slavedealers who indulged in slave-trade with the conviction that it was in perfect accord with the teachings of Jesus and that the Old and New Testaments upheld and advocated slavery.

"The whole history of Christianity", wrote Joseph McCabe in the *Literary Guide,* "needs rewriting. The entire and true story of the relation of Christianity to the people during its thousand years of complete domination has never yet been put before the people......Sunday by Sunday they are told how Christianity abolished slavery and serfdom; how nobles fraternised with commoners in the ages of faith; how Christ was the first to talk of social justice in a grim capitalist world, and so on. These

monstrous untruths should be nailed definitely to the counter."

Such quotations can be multiplied to show that Christianity as a religion legalised slavery and that it was Christianity more than any other factor which was the real hindrance in the way of those enlightened Europeans who wanted to abolish slave-trade.

To Islam goes the credit for laying down principles which, if given the opportunity of full implementation, would have brought about ultimate extinction of slavery. Islam stands out today as the only society which waged a holy war against slavery. Before Islam, slave-girls served the purpose of either satisfying the master's carnal passions or of earning money for him through prostitution. The task before Islam was a most difficult one because the institution had been existing from time immemorial and had therefore led to various complications. It could not be abolished at once because that would have been a rash and imprudent slip, making confusion worse confounded in a country where it lay deeply embedded. As a practical and divinely-inspired reformer, therefore, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) took various practical steps systematically and gradually.

(1) He forbade his followers from calling slaves as bondsmen and bondswomen.

(2) The emancipation of slaves was made an act of the highest virtue.

> "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Books and the Prophets and giveth away his wealth out of love for Him unto the near of kin and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and

those who ask (for help) and for the ransom of slaves and (those who) keep up prayer and pay *Zakat* and fulfil the contracts which they have made and the steadfast insuffering and adversity and at the time of hardship. Such are the truthful ones and such alone are the righteous ones. (*xi:* 177).

(3) To treat slaves as equal was enjoined by him. They were given a status equal to that of their masters and they were to be fed and clothed like their masters.

(4) Marriage with slaves was recommended and the possessors of slaves were enjoined to impart education and culture to their slaves:

> "And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maid-servants. If they be poor, Allah will enrich them of His bounty. Allah is of Ample Means, Aware......Force not your slave-girls to whoredom." (al-Qur'an, *xxiv:* 32:33).

"If," said the Prophet, "a man has a slave-girl in his possession and he instructs her in polite accomplishments and gives her good education, without inflicting any chastisement upon her, and then frees her and marries her, he shall be rewarded with a double reward."

(5) The harsh treatment meted out to a slave was made a sufficient ground for his or her emancipation:

> "He who beats his slave without fault or slaps him on the face," proclaimed the Glorious Prophet, "his atonement for this is freeing him". (Muslim)

(6) It was ordained that if a slave wanted to purchase his or her freedom, he or she should be granted the request, and more than that, should be helped with money and other means. This was contained in an injunction of the Holy Qur'an, (*xxvi:* 33).

(7) The atonement of certain sins was proclaimed to be the freeing of slaves.

(8) It was made a law that no Muslim could be made a slave. This is how the Prophet of Islam attacked the established institution of slavery from all sides and set into motion the process of its annihilation.

PRISONERS OF WAR

The pre-Islamic laws of war generally reveal a picture of cruelty and depravity. The usual coustom was that, of the defeated foes, men were slaughtered and burnt and women and children were enslaved. Islam came as a protest against all these severities and limited the punishments of the aggressor to imprisonment and taught that the captives were either to be generously awarded freedom or allowed to ransom themselves.

"Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve, then it is the smiting of the necks until, when ye have routed them, then making fast of bonds; and afterwards either grace or ransom till the war lay down its burdens" (al-Qur'an, *xlvii:* 4).

Not only did Islam soften the laws of war to the extent of allowing the prisoners to ransom themselves, but it was made a matter of legislation that Muslims themselves should spend their money to assist them in that behalf.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) left no room for slavery in the society which he found prevailing and if there have been a few among some of his unworthy followers who have indulged in slave-trade in Africa, it may directly be traced to the influence of those Imperialist Christian slave-traders who wanted slaves for their colonies.

Indeed, the Holy Prophet was the greatest saviour

of slaves that the world has known. It is reported that one of the last advices he gave to his followers related to the slaves and the servants. The words that trickled from his mouth a little before he breathed his last were:

"Fear Allah in the matter of Prayers and in the matter of those whom your right hand possesses."

Witness of Non-Muslims:

In the following par

with their slaves in equal shares: 'God has made some superior to others in incomes, and yet those who have been so benefited do not divide their income with those whom their right hands have conquered, so that each (master and slave) may have equal shares. How dare they thus to gainsay the goodness of God?"

(Dr. Leitner, *Muhammadanism,* pp. 17-18).

"Descending to the second source of Muhammadan Law, the authenticated traditions or *Hadis,* we find Muhammad stating that 'the worst of men is he who sells men'; Slaves who displeased their masters were to be forgiven 'seventy times a day'; no believer can be made a slave; and 'in proportion to the number of redeemed slaves with members of the body of the releasing person be rescued from the (eternal) fire."

"The history of Muhammadanism has since shown not only the admission of the converted slave on equal terms into Muhammadan society (a circumstance which does not exist to the same extent among Christian Negroes), but also his rise in several Muhammadan countries, including Egypt, to the highest position in the state, whether as an individual or as a member of a whole class of slaves and irrespective of colour. **The brotherhood of Muhammadanism is no mere word. All believers are equal and their own high-priest, Zeid, the ex-slave, led Muhammad's troops ......The Ghaznavide dynasty was founded by the slave Sabaktagin; the first King of Delhi, Kutbuddin, was a slave.**

"Lord Auckland's Minute on the Indian Law Commission, which reported that 'all slavery is excluded from amongst the Muhammadans by the strict letter of their own law, shows that 'the abhorrence of slavery entertained by the English functionary' was then, as now, welcome to the respectable native community......**The cruel treatment**

of slaves has been the reproach of Europeans rather than of Eastern nations. (Dr. Leitner, *Muhammadanism*, pp. 17-18.)

Another Western scholar, writing in the *Westminister Review*, (No. *ix*, pp. 221), said: "His (i.e. Muhammads) law of slavery is, "If slaves come to you, you shall—not imprison and then sell by public sale, though no claimant appears, as in the nineteenth century is the law of Christian England in her provinces, but—'redeem them, and it is forbidden to you to send them forth.' (Koran 11, p. 85). And this was a man standing up in the wilds of Arabia in the seventh century."

POLYGAMY

There has been much loose talk and irresponsible criticism of the institution of polygamy in Islam.* The critics dub polygamy as an evil and curse. They say that this "immoral" and "obnoxious" practice causes much distress in family life. It is also alleged that polygamy is prompted by the lower self of man; it is resorted to by men who are devoid of refined sentiments and who have no regard for the demands of even elementary justice. That is how they pave the way for attacking Islam and its Prophet.

The fact is that these views are based on superficial and half-baked ideas. Christianity, for a host of reasons, is dogmatic in its abhorrence of polygamy. Naturally, this attitude became part and parcel of Western culture. Whether this attitude of the West is based upon reason or

* This may be read in continuation of our observations in chapter I about the status of women in Islam.

upon sheer prejudice will be clear if we study the issue dispassionately and objectively. Let us make one thing quite clear at the very outset: Islam does not **order** or **make it obligatory** for a Muslim male to have more than one wife. Rather it just permits this. Since the Qur'an embodies the final Word from God for the guidance of humanity for all time to come, it could not be indifferent and unmindful of all sorts of circumstances and need of human beings. As our study would show, polygamy has its own social role to play when circumstances so require and this is supported by the conditions obtaining in our own times proved even by our current history.

Normally, Islam recognises only the union of one man and one woman as a desirable form of marriage. However, under special circumstances it allows the man to have more wives than one upto the maximum of four.

Since this institution was to serve a great social purpose in human society, the following Qur'anic verse was emphatic in its assertion. This verse, when read in the context in which it was revealed, points to an important social function of polygamy. The verse says:

> "And if you fear that you cannot act aquitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two, three and four, but if you fear that you may not do justice to them, then (marry) only one." (*vi:* 8).

These words were revealed for the first time after the battle of Uhud. In that battle, seventy out of seven hundred Muslims had died. As such a great social problem for the protection of widows and orphans had arisen. Polygamy was, in those days, an established institution of human society and was much in vogue in Arabia. As would be seen, this verse is not introducing the concept

of polygamy for the first time, but pointing to a convenient solution of the problem—a custom that already existed. Islam only reformed and regulated the institution along with pointing to the social and cultural function of polygamy and asking Muslims to resort to it for solving their problem, it also put a maximum limit to the number of wives that one may have and gave the instruction to observe *justice* among all. "Justice" is the condition precedent, an inviolable rule, enforceable as a moral obligation, and in case of explicit violation, even through law courts.

Also, the context of the verse and its contents very clearly show the social utility of polygamy, and its grea role in solving innumerable ills of human society to which it may fall prey, as indeed it is suffering in the Christian West (as well as the Communist world). Is it not a fact that the world is facing the problem of surplus women in our own times. In certain countries it has assumed baffling proportions. An idea of the extent of this problem may be had from what Dr. Westermarck says in the *Future of Marriage in Western Civilization,* "If we reckon the age of marriage from twenty to twentyfive years, the disproportion between the sexes makes at least three or four per cent women to be, in normal circumstances, compelled to lead a single life in consequence of our obligatory monogamy."

This view is corroborated by a study of the sex-wise distribution of population in most of the Western countries. But the situation has further aggravated in the post-war period. The following statistics, taken from the British Press, are very revealing:

"Over three million women in Britain are doomed to lonely lives without hope of husbands, child or a real home. The surplus women have gradually increased in the

last century. In September 1939, there were 2,818,343 more women than men in Britain. Now the toll of war has taken nearly 3,00,000 men and many thousands are helpless cripples who will never leave their beds." "What is to become of thousands of girls who have lost husbands and sweethearts, is one of Britain's post-war problems", declares a woman correspondent of *Sunday Chronicle.*

"Should every man decide to take a wife it is still estimated that nearly 4,000,000 women will go without husbands."

Shortage of men is not confined to Britain only. America has 12,000,000 spinsters to only 9,000,000 bachelors. In many parts of Europe men are almost stamped out. (*The Statesman,* Delhi, quoted by M. M. Hussain in *Islam* and *Socialism,* p. 194).

It is for this reason that Dr. MacFarlane, in his eye-opening book *The Case for Polygamy,* declares:

"Whether the question is considered socially or religiously, it can be demonstrated that polygamy is not contrary to the highest standards of civilisation. **The suggestion offers a practical remedy for the western problem of the destitute and unwanted female; the alternative is continued and increased prostitution, concubinage and distressing spinsterhood.**

Dr. MacFarlane also observes:

"The fact that polygamy has been practised is itself a proof that the sexes do not exist in the uniform proportion; and I am yet to learn that any widespread scarcity of women has been experienced in the past as the result of such a practice. **Even if there were an equal number of men and women in the world, the enforcement of monogamous marriages would involve as its logical corollary the compelling of every one to marry. On this point alone,**

without the aid of any other argument, monogamy, as a universal system, stands condemned." (*ibid*, p. 79).

The throbbing facts and convincing arguments have made many a modern thinker realise the utility and the social blessings of polygamy, Sir George Scott tells us that:

"In our own century there have been not a few who, noting the preponderance of women, have advocated plural marriages for man." (Scott, Sir George, *Encyclopaedia of Modern Knowledge,* Vol. v. p. 2572).

Sometimes polygamy becomes indispensable for the preservation and maintenance of family life. There are occasions when a second wife is admitted to resolve some distressing situation in the family, for instance, marrying a widow of the family to support her and her children. Wife's barrenness and frigidity, or some infectious disease may make it necessary to have recourse to polygamy. The legitimate sexual needs of a man may impel him to polygamy. If the society is to be saved from the evils of adultery, concubinage, prostitution and immorality, the law and custom of the country must take full notice of man's nature and his needs. That is why Dr. Rom Landau says:

"In an imperfect world, such as we live in, polygamy must be considered both natural and legitimate. To eliminate polygamy completely we should first have to change the entire character of our civilisation, then the nature of man, and, finally, Nature herself." (Landau, Dr. Rom. *Sex, Life and Faith—A Modern Philosophy of sex,* Faber & Faber Ltd., 1946, p. 136).

Throwing light upon the reasons for this belief, he says:

"In my own experience I have had many oppor-

tunities to study some of the most prevalent causes of polygamy among members of modern society. In most cases I have found that polygamous behaviour or polygamous longings went hand in hand with an essentially monogamous nature."

(*ibid*, p. 131.

He concludes:

"All the evidence provided by history and science makes it imperative that polygamy should be recognised more honestly."

George Ryley Scott, the famous authority on sex, while discussing the nature of man, says: "Man is essentially polygamous and the development of civilisation extends this innate polygamy."

(Scott, G. R., *History of Prostitution,* p. 21). Similarly, Lord Mordey declared that 'man is instinctively polygamous.' Havelock Ellis, commenting on this statement, says that:

"If we interpret is as meaning that man is an instinctively monogamous animal with a concomitant desire for sexual variation, there is much evidence in its favour."

(Ellis, Havelock, *The Psychology of Sex,* Vol. IV, p. 495).

Professor C. Von Ehremfels of Prague has gone to the extent of forcefully pleading that polygamy as the general order is much superior to monogamy. On the basis of scientific grounds he asserts that a 'Polygamic marriage order has become necessary, and that it will succeed monogamy because it is 'morally superior' (Quoted by Havelock Ellis, *op cit.,* p. 502.

French sexologist, Dr. Le Bon, predicts that European legislation in future will recognise polygamy. He holds:

"A return to polygamy, the natural relationship between the sexes, would remedy many evils: prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children the misfortune of millions of unmarried women, resulting from the disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy."

Another objection raised by the Western critics is that polygamy is 'uncivilised' and out of tune with the modern times, whereas history shows that in all periods of human civilisation, in all times and climes, polygamy has remained, and even today remains, an important social institution. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* bears testimony to the fact that **'as an institution polygamy exists in all parts of the world.'** (*Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 14th Edition, Vol. XIV, p. 949).

M. Letourneau, in his renowned work *Evolution of Marriage,* says:

"The most civilised nations must have begun with polygamy, **and in reality, it has been thus everywhere and always.** It is a law which has few exceptions'. (Letourneau. *The Evolution of Marriage,* p. 154).

Professor N. W. Ingells, in his essay on 'Biology of Sex', writes:

"Has man always been essentially monogamous or has he come up from a state often designated as promiscuous? The available evidence points to the latter. As an animal, in his sexual makeup, and in his beginnings as far as we can reconstruct them, he is anything but monogamous; and one would have great difficulty in explaining biologically such a sudden change of heart, the transition to a single wife". (Ingells, N. W., **"The Biology of Sex and the Unmarried"** in *The Sex Life of the Unmarried Adult,* Dr. Ira. G. While, 1946, p. 88).

Dr. Westermarck, on unimpeachable evidence, tells us that in every *civilised* society polygamy has prevailed. Even the Greeks *recognised* this institution and treated it with respect "The Athenians', writes Professor H. Licht in his monumental work *Sexual Life of Ancient Greece* 'recognised the polygamous tendency of man and acted accordingly.' (p. 59).

POLYGAMY IN THE WEST

Even the modern West whose abhorrence for polygamy is so much trumpeted, bears evidence that it is polygamous Dr. Rom Landau declares:

"But though in the West the law prohibits polygamy, "in space' it finds itself forced to condone it 'in time', namely, by granting divorce. A man may not have two wives simultaneously, but no one can prevent him from having ten wives over a period of years." (Landau, Dr. Rom, *op. cit.*, p. 137).

But it is too much to say that polygamy is prohibited 'in space'. It has assumed new channels and new forms. M. Letourneau tells us:

"We perceive that, in the present day, in countries reputed to be the most civilised, and even in the classes reputed to be the most distinguished, the majority of individuals have polygamic instincts which they find difficult to resist." (Letourneau, *op cit.*, p. 136).

Max Nordan writes:

"Man lives in a state of polygamy in the civilised countries in spite of the monogamy enforced by law; out of a hundred thousand men there would barely be one who could swear upon his death-bed that he had never known but one single woman during his whole life." **(Nordan Max,** *Conventional Lies of Our Civilisation*. p. 301).

It is thus known that it is not just the preponderance of females over males that necessitate polygamy, but at the same time there are certain other circumstances which require polygamy to be adopted not only for the moral but also for the physical welfare of society. Prostitution, which is on the increase with the advancement of civilisation and which is eating into it like a cancer, with the concomitant increase of illegitimate children, is practically unknown to countries where polygamy is permissible in its legal form.

It is some imes alleged that the institution of polygamy has largely been abused by sensuous people. To this may be submitted that there are people in every society who would abuse any institution however necessary that may be to the proper growth of human society. In countries where polygamy is not allowed, the sensuality of man has invented a hundred other ways of viging vent to his carnal passions, and these are a far greater curse to society than the abuse of polygamy. Indeed that abuse can be easily remedied by proper education of the people, development of healthy social traditions and the organisation of an efficient judicial machinery to protect the rights of the women and the children when and where they are disregarded. Social evils can be eradicated not by the use of brute force or by abolishing historic institutions but through a social process that can purify the society. And that is what Islam wants to do.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

Let there be no compulsion
In religion: Truth stands out
Clear from Error: whoever
Rejects Evil and believes
In God hath grasped
The most trustworthy
Hand-hold, that never breaks.
And God heareth
And knoweth all things.

Holy Qur'an (*Sura II*:256)

Say ye: "We believe
In God, and the revelation
Given to us, and to Abraham,
Ishmael, Issac, Jacob,
And the Tribes, and that given
To Moses and Jesus, and that given
To (all) Prophets from their Lord:
We make no difference
Between one and another of them:
And we bow to God (in Islam)."

Holy Qur'an (*Sura II*:136)

Printed at the Mirror Press Ltd. Karachi

The following Islamic literature is available free of cost, for Universities, Colleges, Libraries, and Muslim Organisations:-

Islam our Choice.

Islam an Introduction.

Islam and Christianity.

The Gospel of Barnabas.

Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society.

Please contact:—

BEGUM AISHA BAWANY WAKF
3rd Floor, Bank House No. 1,
Habib Square, M. A. Jinnah Road,
KARACHI. Tele: 221971/75

HOLY QUR'AN AND BOOKS ON ISLAM
MAY BE HAD FROM FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:

1. Islamic Book Shop,
148, Liverpool Road,
LONDON, N. 1 (U.K.)

2. Al-Madina Trust,
81-B, Upper Tooting Road,
LONDON, S.W. 18 (U.K.)

3. Muslim Students Trust,
38, Mapesbury Road,
LONDON, N.W. 2-4JD
(U.K.)

4. A.H. ABDULLA,
P.O. Box. 81171,
MOMBASA. (KENYA).

5. Islamic Propagation Centre
47-48 Madrasa Arcade,
DURBAN—NATAL
(South Africa)

6. Muslim Students Association,
7301, W. 11th Avenue,
GARY INDIANA 46404
(U.S.A.)

7. Begum Aisha Bawany Wakf,
3rd Floor, Bank House No. 1,
Habib Square,
M. A. Jinnah Road,
KARACHI. PAKISTAN